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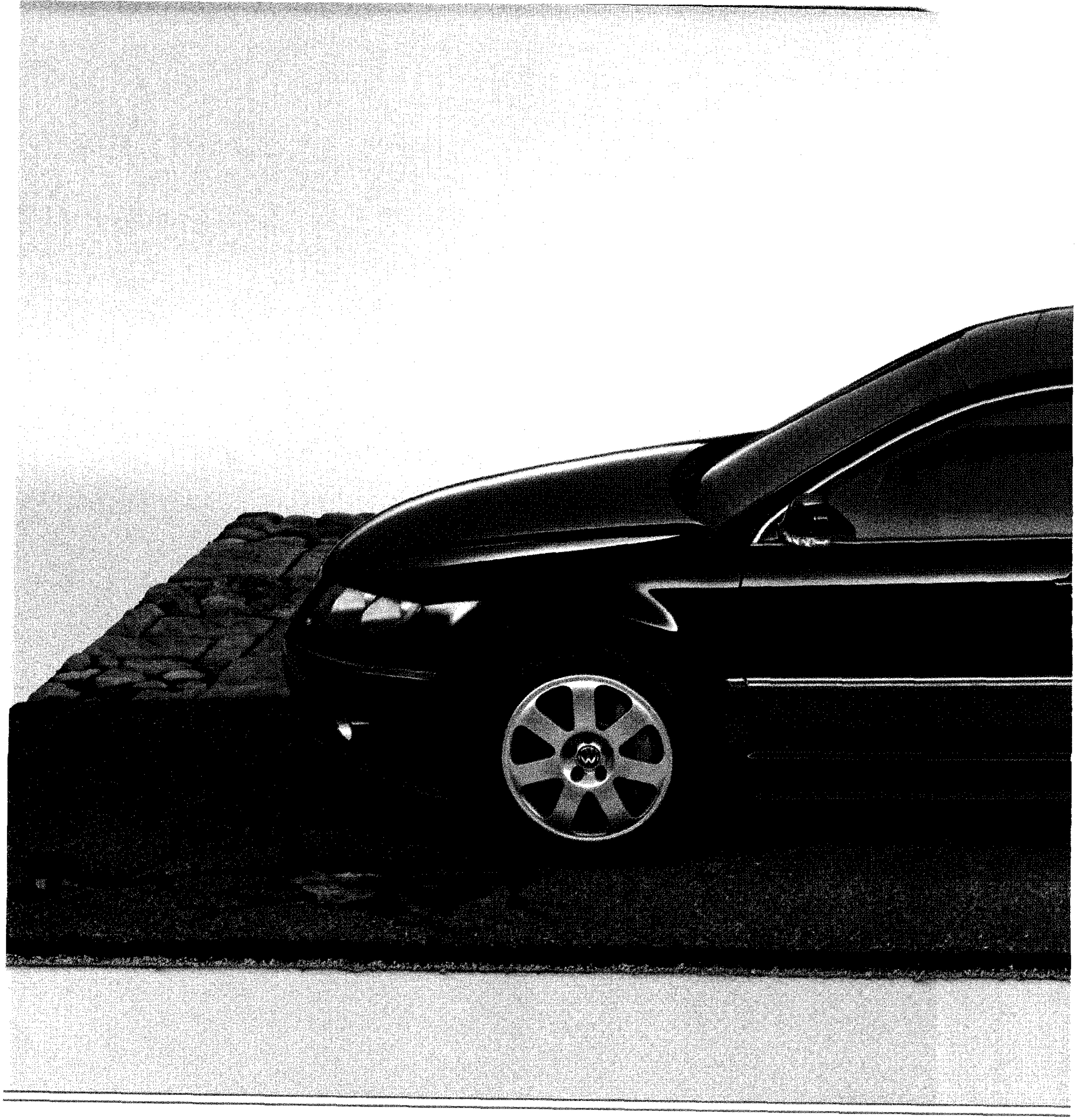
THE NEW YORKER

MAY 17, 2004



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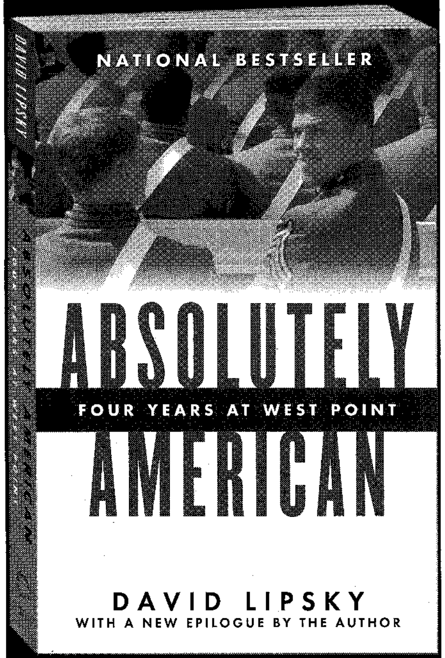

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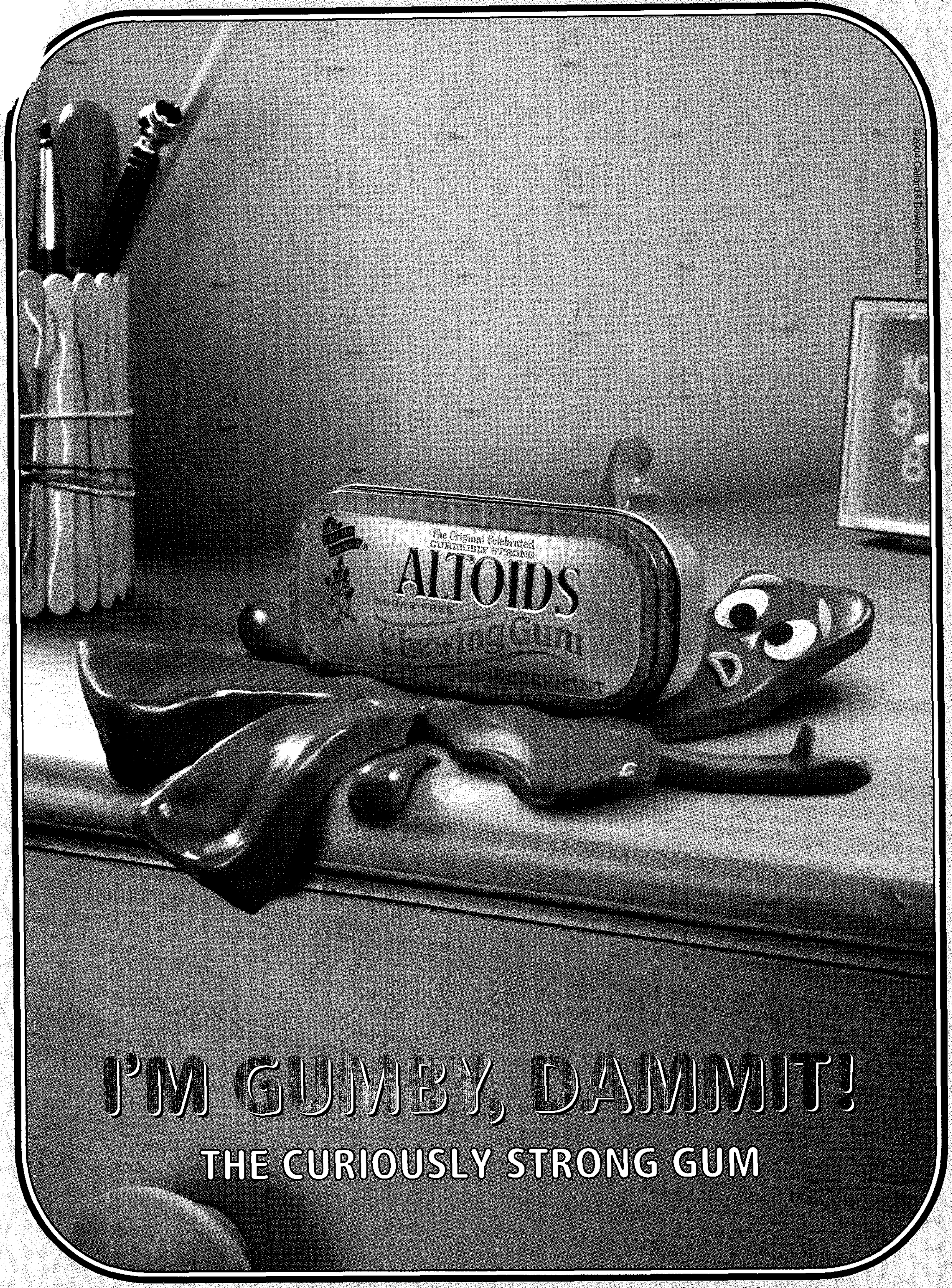
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CONTRIBUTORS

Seymour M. Hersh (“Chain of Command,” p. 38) won a 1970 Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on the My Lai massacre. His pieces on the misuse of intelligence won the National Magazine Award for public-interest journalism last week.

Rebecca Mead (The Talk of the Town, p. 31) has been writing for the magazine since 1997.

Ben McGrath (“Project Knuckleball,” p. 54) is a staff writer.

Stephen J. Dubner (“The Silver Thief,” p. 74) is the author of “Turbulent Souls: A Catholic Son’s Return to His Jewish Family.”

Czeslaw Milosz (Poem, p. 82) won the 1980 Nobel Prize in Literature. A new collection of his poems, “A Second Space,” will be published in the fall.

Marc Rosenthal (Cover) has illustrated several children’s books, including “Dig!,” which is out this month. He also contributes to the magazine *Blab*.

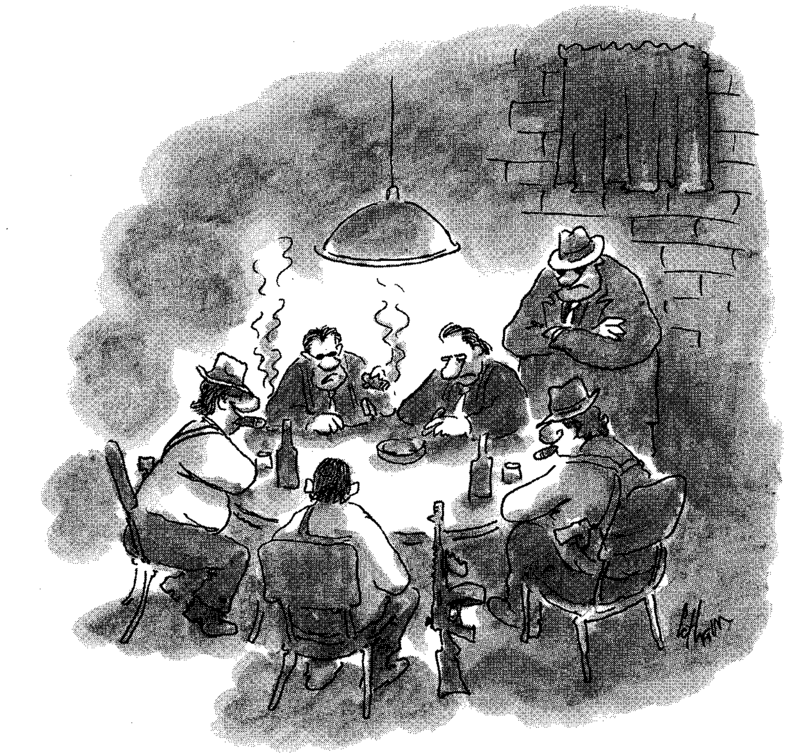
George Packer (“Caught in the Cro fire,” p. 62) received two Overseas Press Club awards this year, for “War After the War,” about Iraq, and “The Children of Freetown,” about the legacy of the war in Sierra Leone.

Andrew Sean Greer (Fiction, p. 86) has published three works of fiction, including “The Confessions of Max Tivoli,” a novel, which came out in February.

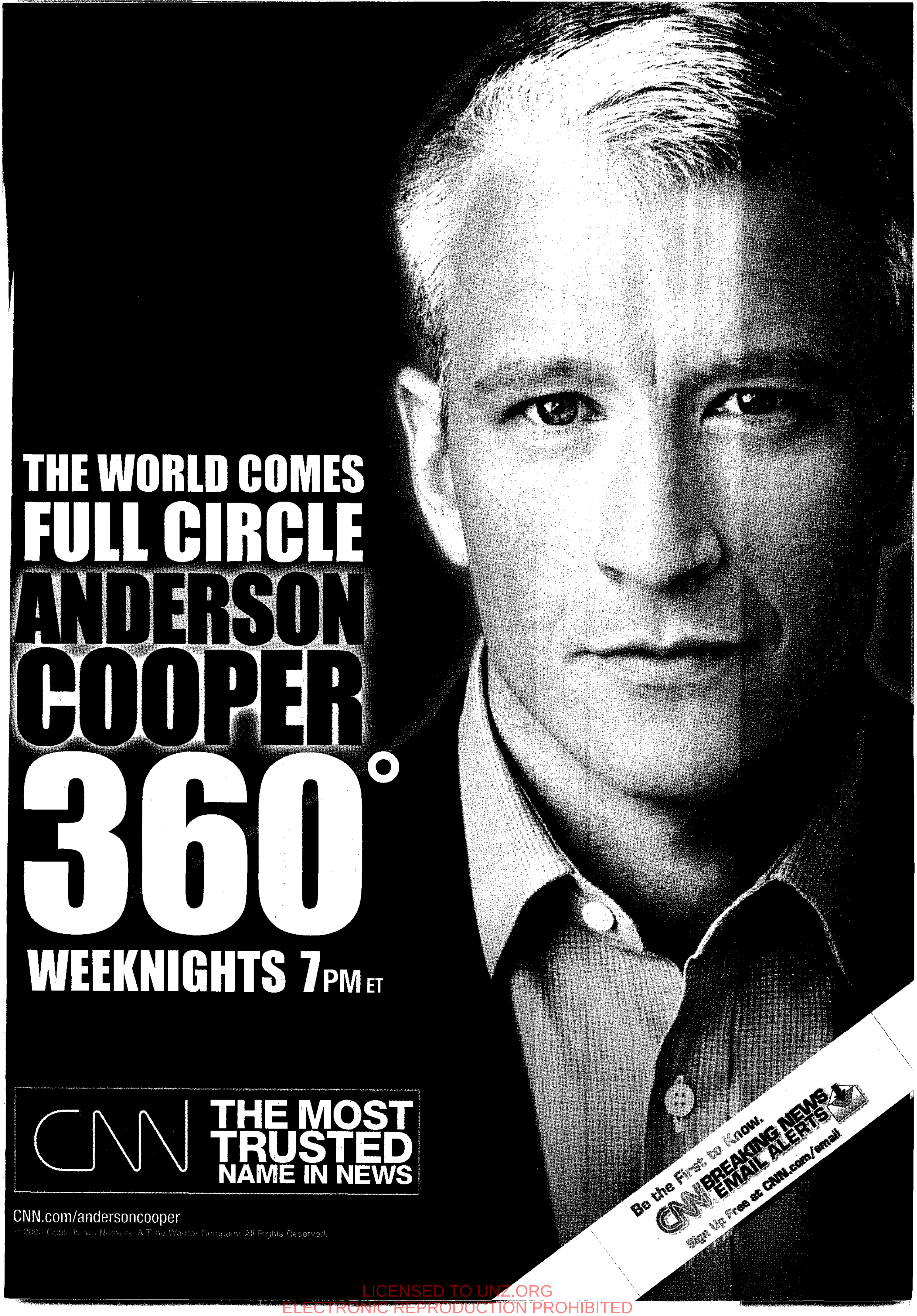
Louis Menand (Books, p. 92) is a professor of English at Harvard. His books include “The Metaphysical Club,” for which he won a Pulitzer Prize, and “American Studies.”

Mary Karr (Poem, p. 96) is the author of two memoirs and three books of poems, including “Viper Rum” and “The Devil’s Tour.”

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 107), a film critic for the magazine, is the author of “Great Books” and, most recently, “American Sucker.” ♦



“He’s a former general in Saddam’s Army, but we need his expertise.”



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THE MAIL

GOODBYE TO A FRIEND

I was married to Philip Hamburger for twenty-three years, after which, as the late writer William Maxwell predicted at the time of our divorce, Phil became my best friend, as did his wonderful wife, Anna (Postscript, May 3rd). Phil's death, on April 23rd, so soon after Anna's, left a void that, at eighty-seven, I can't fill. Phil and I met in 1939 in the library of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, where he had been a student the previous year, and which I was attending at the time. We began a conversation that lasted sixty-five years.

In addition to two delightful and loving sons, Jay and Richard, we shared an abiding belief in the greatness of the system of government in the United States. We both believed that the balance of power among the executive, the Congress, and the judiciary was the sacred foundation that made our democracy work. It was a clumsy system, sometimes out of joint, but it always seemed to right itself. After the Bush Administration began its disastrous preëmption policy, our conversations centered on the steady erosion of democracy in the United States. Each day brought new grief: the polarizing politics at the Supreme Court, the heartless legislation of the Republicans in Congress, and, above all, the misuse of the executive functions of the Presidency—the destruction of individual rights; tax shields for the wealthy and a massive deficit that is out of control; secret agendas, distortions of the truth, and outright lies; the smashing of international treaties and the contempt for longtime allies; and now a disastrous war in Iraq, with heartbreaking loss of life for all sides.

Anna's admirable way of expressing her indignation was to write a personal letter, almost every day when she felt pressed, to the President of the United States. Philip's way was to write with strength and beauty about the great diversity and marvellous qualities inherent in this country, and in its people. He cherished the right, as he often said, "to vote the bastards out." Beyond all his charm and wit—he was the funniest person I ever knew—Phil had an awesome regard for the grand nature of the democratic process that defines America. This was his religion.

Edith Iglauer
Garden Bay, B.C.

WHY BROWN MATTERED

Cass R. Sunstein, in his survey of the legacy of efforts to end school segregation in this country, asks, "Did Brown matter?" (Books, May 3rd). Legal scholarship alone can't measure the reach of the Supreme Court's unanimous decision in Brown v. Board of Education. For those of us who joined the sit-in movements against discrimination in public accommodations in the early sixties—I served as vice-chairman of the Baltimore chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality—Brown was a constitutional Declaration of Independence. It told us that the law was at last on the side of racial equality and gave us an absolute sense of confidence: we would win, because segregation was now both wrong and illegal. Ultimately, the government, history, and American values were on our side. Because of Brown, the American flag was ours.

John Roemer
Parkton, Md.

CORRECTION: Because of an editorial error, the Books piece in the May 3rd issue stated that the Alabama governor James Folsom lost the 1958 gubernatorial election to a hard-line segregationist. At that time, Alabama governors were not allowed to serve consecutive terms; Folsom did run again for the office in 1962, when he was defeated by George Wallace.

•

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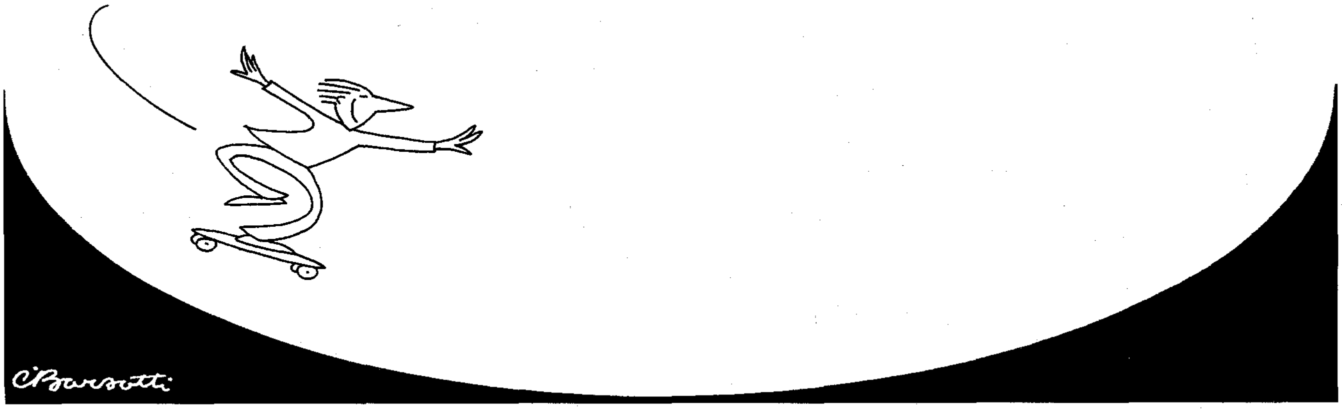

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16	17	18	12	13	14	15

For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK

THE WAGES OF SYNTH

In 1954, a Queens teen-ager named Robert Moog started selling homemade electronic musical instruments; within a decade he had invented the Moog synthesizer, a bulky keyboard that became a staple of pop-music compositions. This week at the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill, some of the Moog's most devoted practitioners, including the progressive-rock stalwarts Rick Wakeman and Keith Emerson (who will be bringing the massive console he played at the Isle of Wight in 1970) and the funk wizard Bernie Worrell, pay tribute. (May 18; see Night Life.)

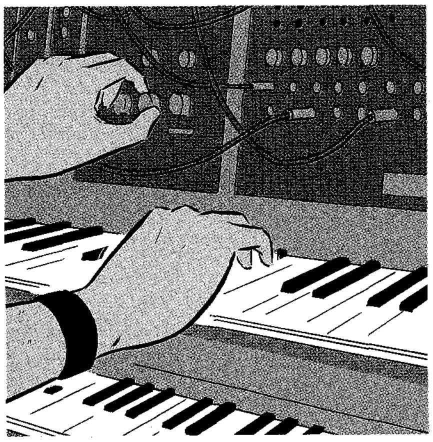
BETWEEN LAND AND SEA

New York City has nearly six hundred miles of shoreline, but for most New Yorkers, the notion of enjoying the waterfront ranks right alongside the idea of having a picnic in Central Park at midnight. The local nonprofit organization Going Coastal has just published a guidebook that gives information on sailing, scuba diving, fishing, surfing, and swimming. Yacht designers, aquarium curators, environmentalists, and other water lovers will celebrate the book on the tall ship Peking at the South Street Seaport. (May 13; see Above and Beyond.)

HONG KONG, SOFTLY

Most films made in Hong Kong are filled with high-flying, high-octane fight scenes. Wong Kar-Wai is an anomaly. His movies, including "Fallen Angels" and "In the Mood for Love," languorously fetishize ordinary movements; he uses slow-motion and pixellation effects to transform something as commonplace as a nightly walk to buy noodles into a sombre romantic journey. Over the next two weekends, BAM Rose Cinemas will screen all of Wong's films, including "Chungking Express," a 1994 love story championed by Quentin Tarantino. (Starting May 14; see Movies.)

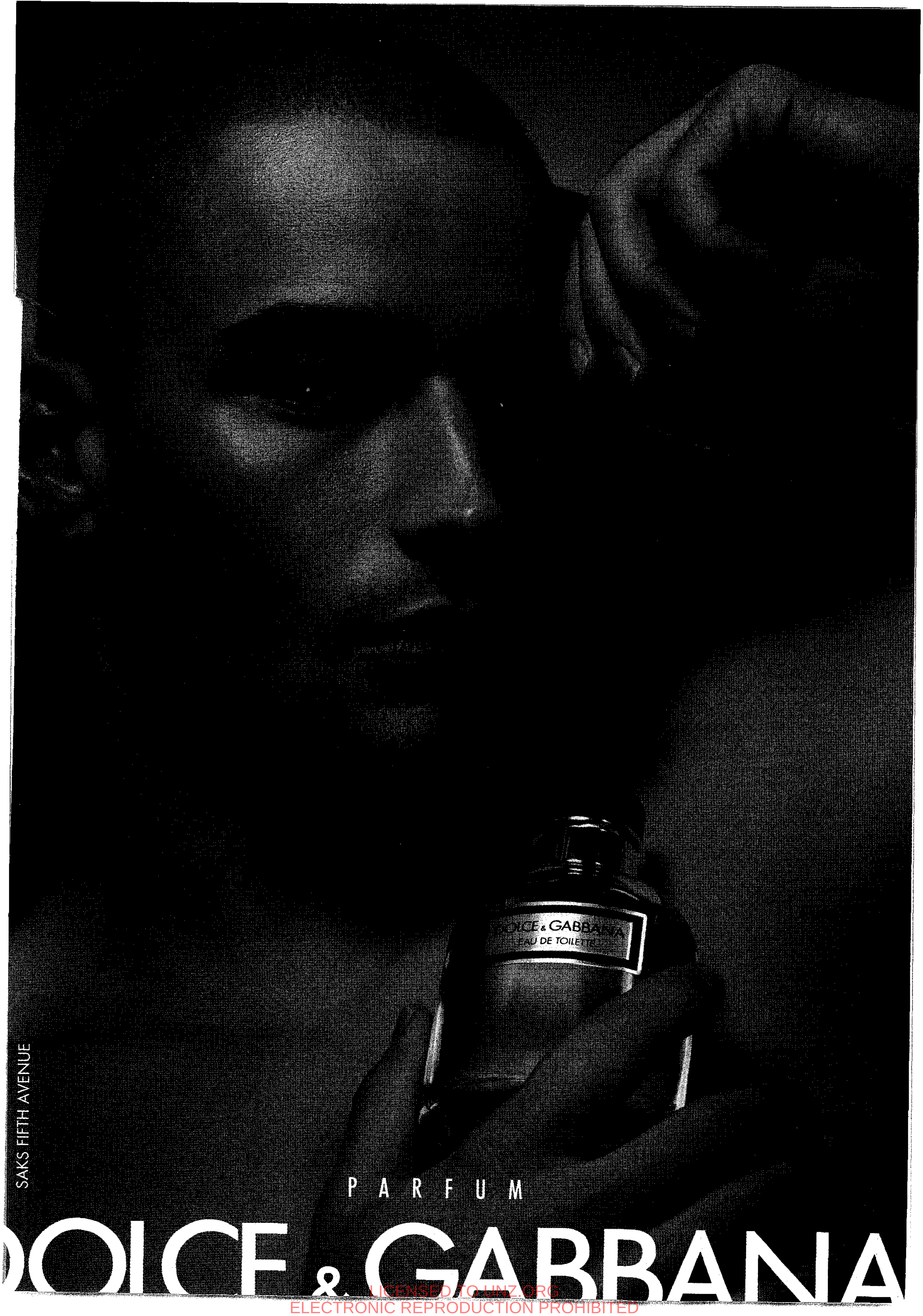
Going Coastal celebrates the release of its guide to the New York City waterfront.



A tribute to the inventor of the Moog synthesizer, at B. B. King Blues Club.

The complete films of the Hong Kong auteur Wong Kar-Wai, at BAM.

ADRIAN TOMINE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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BOY
In a play by Julia Jordan, a new arrival in a small town (T. R. Knight) forms a complicated friendship with a local man (Kelly AuCoin). Directed by Joe Calarco. In previews. Opens May 18 at 7. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 212-279-4200.)

"My Renaissance Faire Lady," a new play from the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre, at St. Mark's In-the-Bowery.

SYLVIA PLACHY

CHINESE FRIENDS
A Chinese strategy game serves as an allegory for a competition between a son and his estranged father, in a new play by Jon Robin Baitz. Directed by Robert Egan. With sets by Santo Loquasto and lighting by Donald Holder. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

HERE LIES JENNY
Bebe Neuwirth stars in a musical performance that weaves together the music of Kurt Weill and lyrics by Bertolt Brecht, Ira Gershwin, Langston Hughes, and Alan Jay Lerner (among others). Choreographed by Ann Reinking and directed by Roger Rees, with musical direction by Leslie Stifelman. In previews. (Zipper Theatre, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

LIGHT RAISE THE ROOF
A new play by Kia Corthron, about a man who struggles to find housing for the homeless during a freezing winter. Michael John Garcés directs. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHARITY OF JOAN OF ARC
The inventive, Obie-winning company Target Margin presents the American première of a nineteenth-century play by Charles Péguy, translated from the French by Julian Green. Directed by David Herskovits. In previews. Opens May 12 at 8:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

OTHELLO
The Aquila Theatre Company presents a new production, set on a British military base on Cyprus. Part of the audience sits among the actors, in the middle of the stage. Starring Lloyd Notice as Othello and Anthony Cochrane as Iago. Directed and adapted by Robert Richmond. Previews begin May 18. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 25th St. between Lexington and Third Aves. 212-239-6200.)

SIGHT UNSEEN
Laura Linney stars in a revival of Donald Margulies's play about a successful but lonely artist who looks up an old flame. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. In previews. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ASSASSINS
The Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's musical about nine marginalized souls who each took aim at an American President is well sung, gorgeous to look at, and meticulous in its detail. But it has been freighted with more weight than it can properly carry. This dark cartoon—a kind of glib carnival of carnage—was first performed in 1991, at the beginning of the Gulf War, and was meant to have its Broadway début just after September 11, 2001. The delay of more than two years has not helped the show's karma or its message. Directed by Joe Mantello. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/3/04.) (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.)

BARE: A POP OPERA
Set in a Catholic boarding school, this show by Jon Hartmere, Jr. (book and lyrics), and Damon Intrabartolo (book and music) brings to mind a musical version of "The O.C.": a clique of amazing-looking teen-agers get into an inordinate amount of predictable but compelling trouble. The crisis, related in energized pop ballads that could be in heavy rotation on MTV, concerns a love quadrangle between two gay lovers (John Hill as a jock and Michael Arden as a sensitive guy), a lascivious but misunderstood girl (Jenna Leigh Green), and a rich kid (Aaron Lohr). At first the characters seem like types, but the songs make things more complicated. "Birthday, Bitch!" provides a bit of comeuppance for the girl, and "God Don't Make No Trash" is a nice slice of neo-soul sung by a nun. Directed by Kristin Hanggi. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. Through May 27.)

BOMBAY DREAMS
One of the silliest musicals in recent memory. In this British import, the "scum from the slum" Akaash (the hardworking Manu Narayan) gets discovered by a zaftig Bollywood diva, Rani (the hard-shaking Ayesha Dharker), and becomes a star. Over the course of nine production numbers, Akaash briefly forgets his roots, but not, unfortunately, the lyrics, by Don Black, including those of the show's hit song, "Shakalaka Baby," whose most eloquent passage goes, "Shakalaka baby shakalaka baby / Come and shakalaka with me." Deep Singh's and David Sharma's percussion is excellent, but when you find yourself watching the drummers at the side of the stage instead of the exotic nubile hordes giving good cleavage in front of you, there's a problem. (5/10/04) (Broadway, 1681 Broadway, at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

BUG
A dark comedy by Tracy Letts ("Killer Joe"), starring Shannon Cochran, Michael Shannon, and Michael Cullen. Directed by Dexter Bullard. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.)

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE
Tony Kushner's bittersweet autobiographical saga about two stranded souls—eight-year-old Noah Gellman (Harrison Chad), who is suffering from the twin griefs of a recently deceased mother and a newly acquired stepmother, and his family's saturnine maid, Caroline Thibodeaux (Tonya Pinkins)—settles for no easy emotional solutions. Set in Louisiana in 1963, it takes the musical back to storytelling, to a moral universe, to a dissection of American society, and to folklore—that is, the lore of the folk, both black and white. With music by Jeanine Tesori. Directed by George C. Wolfe. (O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE DISTANCE FROM HERE
Neil LaBute's play about loveless teen-agers and a dysfunctional suburban family, which played in London at the Almeida two years ago, has its American première. Anna Paquin leads the cast. Directed by Michael Greif. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

FINIAN'S RAINBOW
In this enchanting concert version of the quirky musical by Yip Harburg, Fred Saidy, and Burton Lane, an Irish immigrant (Jonathan Freeman), his daughter, Sharon (Kerry O'Malley), and a leprechaun (Malcolm Gets) arrive in the backward state of Missitucky to foil a racist politico. Gets emits superhuman energy; he leaps, he pounces, he pouts, and he even bumps a pianist off the bench and races through a number himself. The cast does a grand job with the songs, including "Old Devil Moon," "How Are Things in Glocca Morra?," and "Necessity," a stirring solo from the contralto Terri White. The proceedings are knit together by a charismatic narrator, David Staller. Adapted and directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Rep, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

FROZEN
Bryony Lavery's play about a grieving woman whose daughter was killed by a pedophile has moved to Broadway. Starring Swoosie Kurtz and Brían F. O'Byrne and directed by Doug Hughes. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

GUINEA PIG SOLO
Labyrinth Theatre Company and the Public Theatre present a new play by Brett C. Leonard, set in the present day, about a Hispanic soldier who returns home to New York City from Iraq. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

HOMEBODY/KABUL
Tony Kushner has retooled his 2001 play about a British housewife's fascination with Afghanistan, which now appears at BAM in a new production starring Linda Emond, Reed Birney, and, in her New York stage début, Maggie Gyllenhaal. Directed by Frank Galati. (Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Through May 30.)

INTIMATE APPAREL
Lynn Nottage's subtle and compelling play, a Roundabout Theatre Company production, reveals the fine emotional filigree of an ordinary black woman's life and the social forces that shape it. Starring Viola Davis and Russell Hornsby. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (4/19 & 26/04) (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

JUMPERS
In Tom Stoppard's 1972 farce about ratiocination (London's Royal National Theatre production, which is revived at the Brooks Atkinson under the direction of David Leveaux), the author attempts to affirm the existence of God through striptease, song, parody, paradox, a trained turtle, and a lost rabbit called Thumper. Intellectual audacity and chaotic idiocy combine in Stoppard's particular showy farce form. (5/3/04) (256 W. 47th St. 212-307-7171.)

MY RENAISSANCE FAIRE LADY
A new play from the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre, written and directed by Evan Cabnet, is described as a "Dungeons-and-Dragons-style heavy metal/prog-rock musical without much singing." (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-533-4650.)

PRYMATE
A new play by Mark Medoff ("Children of a Lesser God"), about scientists who work with a gorilla that communicates through American Sign Language, stars André De Shields, Phyllis Frelich, James Naughton, and Heather Tom. Directed by Edwin Sherin. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

A RAISIN IN THE SUN
In 1959, Lorraine Hansberry's play—the first by an African-American woman to be produced on Broadway—poetically augured the uproar to come in the sixties. Hansberry parsed African-Americans' complex attitudes about race and class through the astutely observed dynamics of the Youngers, a working-class Chicago family. In a revival at the Royale, the purest music of "Raisin" sounds through the female characters. Phylicia Rashad, as Lena, the family matriarch, gives a breakthrough performance; she knows how to make the smallest glance pay off. Sanaa Lathan, as Beneatha, Lena's outspoken, idealistic daughter, is Rashad's equal in panache. And the expert Audra McDonald, as Ruth, the wife of Lena's frustrated, callow son, Walter Lee, shades her depressed character in distinctive blue notes. As Walter Lee, Sean Combs is making his stage début. Handsome, muscular, and full of attitude, he is a brave man; in time, he may even be a good actor. In order to keep Combs from lowering the amperage of the crucial scenes, the director, Kenny Leon, cleverly contrives to mask him. This absence of texture mutes the resonance of Walter Lee's character, but not, luckily, of the play itself, whose well-crafted structure generates its own thrilling momentum. (5/10/04) (242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

WHERE DO WE LIVE?
The young playwright Christopher Shinn makes his directorial début with a drama about the intersecting lives of two young men, one white, one African-American, who live on the Lower East Side. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
The week begins with a repertory program and continues with A.B.T.'s ornate, ravishing production of Makarova's "La Bayadère" (after Petipa), with its sinuous temple dancer, Nikiya; her rival, Gamzatti; the faithless Solor; and a whirling golden idol. Principals take turns in the lead roles—Nina Ananiashvili, Gillian Murphy, Angel Corella, Herman Cornejo, and others. For a full cast list, see www.abt.org. ♦ May 11 at 8 and May 12 at 2 and 8: "Petite Mort," "Sechs Tänze," "Pillar of Fire," and "Within You Without You: A Tribute to George Harrison." ♦ May 13-14 and May 17-18 at 8 and May 15 at 2 and 8: "La Bayadère." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Highlights of the week are a British tribute (which includes Christopher Wheeldon's new ballet "Shambards," set to a score by the Scottish composer James MacMillan) and an Italian tribute. ♦ May 12 at 8 (an all-Balanchine program): "Ballo Della Regina," "Episodes," and "Union Jack." ♦ May 13 at 8 and May 15 at 2: "Dances at a Gathering" and "Union Jack." ♦ May 14 at 8 (an all-Balanchine program): "Divertimento No. 15," "Variations pour une Porte et un Soupir," and "The Four Temperaments." ♦ May 15 at 8 (British tribute): "Shambards" and "Union Jack." ♦ May 16 at 3 (an all-Balanchine program): "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," "Ballo Della Regina," "Variations pour une Porte et un Soupir," and "The Four Temperaments." ♦ May 18 at 7:30 (an all-Balanchine Italian tribute): "Ballo Della Regina," "Square Dance," and "La Sonnambula." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570.)

"NOIR"
Ten men and women dressed in costumes inspired by antiheroes and antiheroines from classic films perform a new dance by Noémie Lafrance, set in a garage on the Lower East Side. The audience views the performance from the seats of twenty-five parked cars, into which Brooks Williams's cinematic score is piped. (Delancey and Essex Municipal Parking Garage, 105 Essex St. 212-868-4444. May 12-15 at 7:30 and 9:30. Through May 29.)

RICHARD ALSTON DANCE COMPANY
The American début season of the influential British choreographer's company continues at the Joyce. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 11-15 at 8 and May 16 at 2.)

SYMPHONY SPACE'S DANCE SAMPLER
In the annual four-hour marathon, sixteen New York companies display a broad range of dance styles. The evening's main attractions are Deborah

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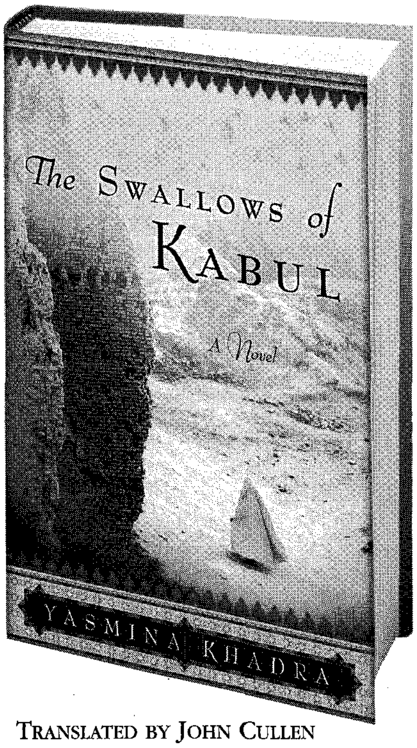
Additional support provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. Indemnity granted by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art acknowledges Amtrak's promotional support of the *Byzantium* exhibition.
Icon of the Archangel Gabriel (detail), 13th century, The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

"I am so grateful that *The Swallows of Kabul* has been written, and written with such relentless poetry and passion."
—AZAR NAFISI, bestselling author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*



TRANSLATED BY JOHN CULLEN

"Mesmerizing...beautifully written...puts a human face on the suffering inflicted by the Taliban."
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"Harrowing...very much in the tradition of Albert Camus."
—MICHIKO KAKUTANI, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

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Zall and David Gordon/Pick Up Performance group, joined by the controlled, kinetic ballet of Dwight Rhoden/Complexions, the hip-hop street energy of Nicholas Leichter, and the postmodern antics of Keely Garfield and of Roseanne Chamecki and Andrea Lerner's company, Chamecki-Lerner. The program includes a tender new duet performed by Richard Daniels and Regina Larkin, from the work in progress by Daniels and Scott Rink, "Telling Tales," and revisits the duet "Breakfast with You," by Chris Elam's Misnomer Dance Theatre, in which the partners climb on top of each other and cling, fusing into weird hybrids. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 15 at 7.)

"TRIBUTE TO YURIKO: BOUNDLESS TALENT"
As a soloist in the forties with Martha Graham, Yuriko was modern dance's first Japanese-American star, and in the fifties she performed on Broadway in "The King and I." Today, at eighty-four, she is one of the foremost teachers of Graham's technique. The Japan Society honors her with this show of archival dance footage, notably her performance as Mary in "Primitive Mysteries," Graham's signature role, which Yuriko learned in 1964. The evening continues with a conversation between the guest of honor and Paul Taylor, who was also in the Graham company in the fifties. Miki Orihara, a principal with the current Graham company, ends the evening with a performance of a segment of Yuriko's solo "Cry." (333 E. 47th St. 212-752-3015. May 17 at 7:30.)

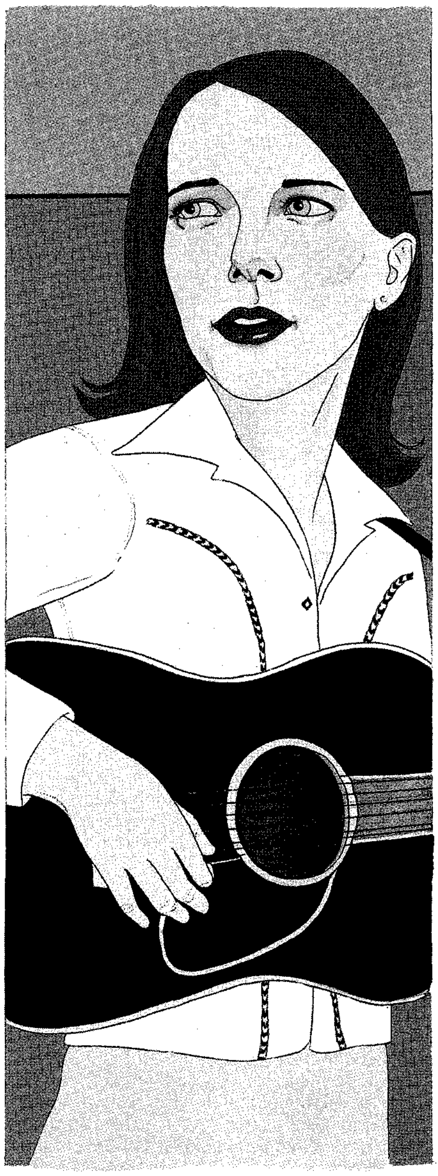
MOVEMENT RESEARCH TWENTY-FIFTH-ANNIVERSARY GALA
In 1978, when the artist-run, forward-thinking organization Movement Research was founded, government funding for dance was plentiful and similar institutions were springing up everywhere. Twenty-five years later, few such groups remain, and Movement Research is throwing a party to celebrate its longevity. Meredith Monk performs at a gala at 6, and, later in the evening, a full performance features Steve Paxton, Ralph Lemon, Julie Atlas Muz, David Gordon with Valda Setterfield, Ann Liv Young, and a reconstruction of Yvonne Rainer's "Trio A." (Streb Lab for Action Mechanics, 51 N. 1st St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. For more information, call 212-539-2611. May 14 at 9.)

"DANCING ASIA/NEW YORK"
Eiko and Koma, the curators of this event, which highlights Asian and Asian-American dancers in New York, have established vaudevillian restrictions: dances can't last longer than seven minutes, and the stage is six feet square. The dozen or so performers include H. T. Chen, Yoshiko Chuma, and Uttara Asha Coorlawada. A joint presentation with Danspace. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 212-517-2472. May 14-15 at 8.)

LAR LUBOVITCH DANCE COMPANY
A new evening-length work, "Pentimento," marks the company's thirty-fifth anniversary. (Washington Square United Methodist Church, 135 W. 4th St. 212-868-4444. May 12-13 and May 17-18 at 8 and May 14-15 at 8 and 10. Through May 22.)

PHILADANCO
The Philadelphia Dance Company's season at the Joyce is entitled "We Too Dance: African American Men in Dance." Eleo Pomare's "Back to Bach" (1983) emphasizes the dancers' sculptural physiques and powerful technique; "Sweet in the Morning" (1991), by the late Leni Wylliams, is a soulful solo. A bold new ensemble piece by Christopher Huggins, "Blue," set to music by Steve Reich, Arvo Pärt, and Ryuichi Sakamoto, plays with notions of manliness. Bare-chested dancers in long split skirts resemble figures in a pharaonic frieze. The troupe's women join in for the repertory work "Elegy" and for "Steal Away," a new piece by Alonzo King. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 18 at 8. Through May 23.)

BATTLEWORKS DANCE COMPANY
The New York début of Robert Battle's two-year-old company features the world première of "Spoken," about the nature of fanaticism; the New York première of "Alleluia," about purification rituals; and the repertory pieces "Mood Indigo," "Takademe," "The Hunt," and the comic duet "Two." Last summer, describing the group's performance at Jacob's Pillow, we wrote, "Battle submits his dancers to a gruelling relentless ritual—a test of endurance for them, a thrill for us." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 18 at 7. Through May 22.)


Laura Cantrell performs with friends at the Winter Garden.

LARA TOMLIN

"ANTIGONE: AS PLAYED & DANCED BY THREE FATES ON THE WAY TO BECOMING THREE GRACES"
A revival of Big Dance Theatre's production of the Sophocles play, adapted by Mac Wellman, with choreography and musical staging by Annie-B Parson. Rebecca Wisocky is Creon, and Deirdre O'Connell is Antigone. Directed by Paul Lazar. (Classic Stage, 136 E. 13th St. 212-677-4210. Through May 23.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"THRIFT SHOP SONGBOOK LIVE"
Laura Cantrell was born in Nashville, but she has spent half her life in New York City, where, as the host of WFMU's "Radio Thrift Shop," she has tried to bring a little country comfort to her adopted home. She's also a talented performer with two albums to her credit. She'll appear here with her band and such friends as John Wesley Harding, Marshall Crenshaw, and Angel and Sue Garner. (Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. No tickets necessary. May 12 at 7.)

YES
The perpetually unfashionable progressive-rock juggernaut barrels into its thirty-fifth year of dizzying time signatures, frilly solos, and Jon Anderson's high-pitched vocals. (Madison Square Garden. 212-307-7171. May 13 at 8.)

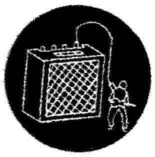
JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Mary Lou Williams was a brilliant pianist, composer, and arranger who made her mark during the swing era and then charted her own unclassifiable course through the bop years and beyond. Her contributions to jazz have yet to be fully acknowledged, but the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra will do its best to correct this injustice. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. May 13-14 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
May 15 at 8: The renowned tabla player Zakir Hussain and his Masters of Percussion ensemble. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

LIL' MALCOLM & THE ZYDECO HOUSE ROCKERS
Top-shelf dance music from southwestern Louisiana. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, at 13th St. For more information, call 212-685-7597, or visit www.letszydeco.com. May 16 at 7:30.)

SIDNEY BECHET SOCIETY
Benny Goodman was the clarinet-playing linchpin of the swing era; Sidney Bechet was the clarinet-and-soprano-saxophone master of New Orleans jazz. This ambitious tribute concert brings their music together. With Vince Giordano's Night-

POP NOTES

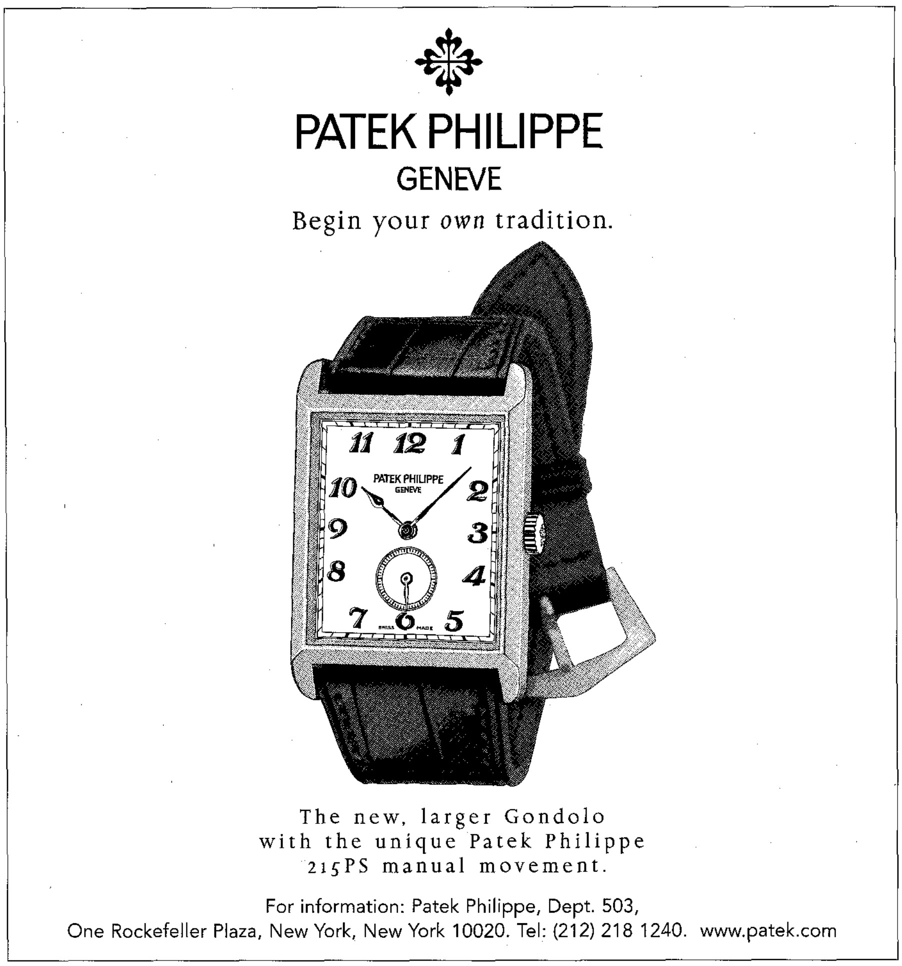


THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER

The prospect of a good new Todd Rundgren album seems like an impossibility here in 2004, but **"Liars"** (Sanctuary) is at least good, and maybe even better than that. As rock's resident genius back in the seventies, Rundgren was a one-man wrecking crew who put together a series of stunning avant-pop albums ("Something/Anything?," from 1972, was more pop; "A Wizard, a True Star," from the following year, more avant), produced several groundbreaking works for other artists (everything from the New York Dolls' début to Meat Loaf's "Bat Out of Hell"), and then ranged all over the pop map, turning up on the charts every once in a while. But in the last fifteen years, despite plenty of forward thinking on such matters as interactivity and Internet distribution, Rundgren became a musical relic, putting out records that were preachy, overly clever, or just plain incoherent.

"Liars" is none of the above. It's an ambitious concept album about the ways people practice deception—toward lovers, toward voters, toward themselves, toward higher forces. When he's not mounting a vicious attack on governmental hypocrisy (the Arabic flavor of the title track points directly to Iraq), Rundgren laments the soullessness of contemporary music, weighs in on the war between the sexes, and generally demonstrates that his penchant for off-kilter pop is intact. "Stood Up," a gleefully pessimistic look at the perils of independent thinking, sounds like a mash-up of every quirky pop song of the last thirty years (Cornershop's "Sleep on the Left Side" is in there, along with Thomas Dolby's "Hyperactive" and God knows what else). "Future," which recalls the utopian "world of tomorrow" promised to Rundgren in his childhood, uses its nostalgia to wonderfully eerie effect. But the real treasures are the ballads. Rundgren has always been rooted in Philadelphia soul music, and two of the tracks here, "Sweet" and especially "Past," are gorgeous specimens of blue-eyed soul, sung with a passion and precision that would (and should) shame most younger performers.

—*Ben Greenman*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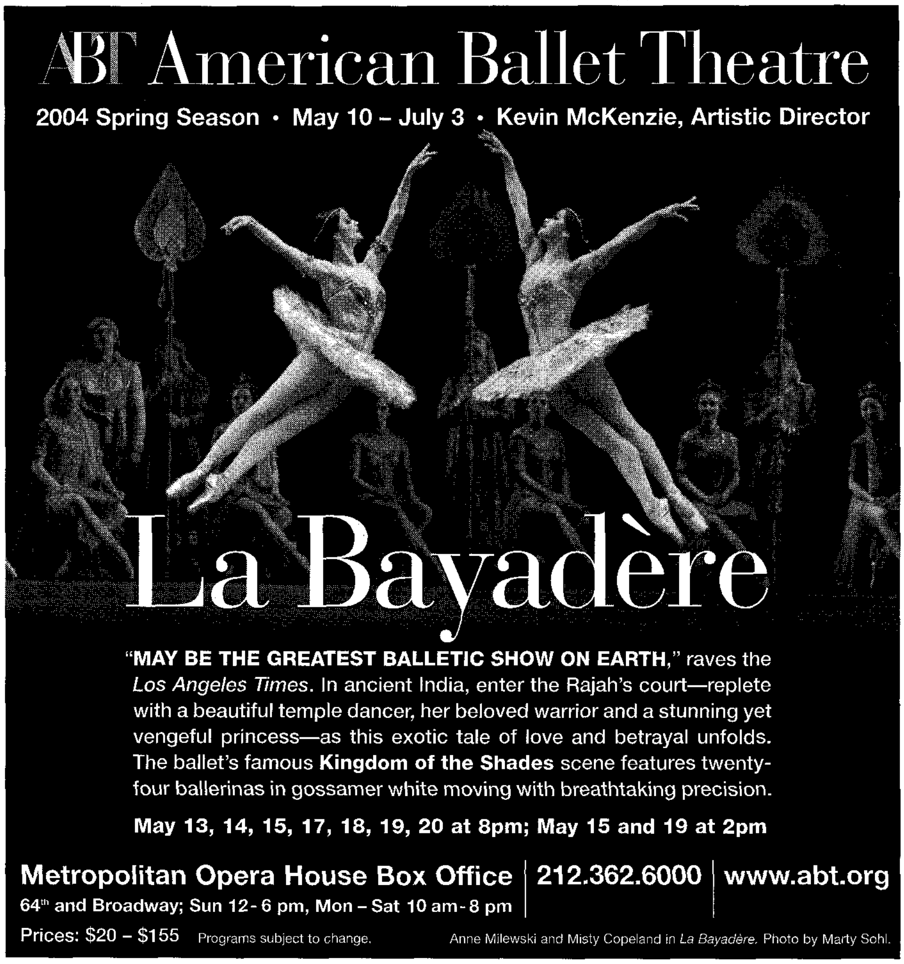
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Anne Milewski and Misty Copeland in *La Bayadère*. Photo by Marty Sohl.

hawks, Wycliffe Gordon, Ruth Brisbane, and the tap-dancing Young Hoofers. (All Souls Unitarian Church, Lexington Ave. at 80th St. For more information, call 516-627-4468. May 17 at 7:30.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—May 14: The **Howard Fishman Quartet.** Led by the guitarist and gravelly-voiced singer Fishman, a Connecticut native who spent his musically formative years in New Orleans, the band spins out an eclectic mix of small-group swing, early American folk, and even indie rock. May 15: American roots music with the **Wiyos.**

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—May 15: The singer-songwriter **Christopher Cross** had a tidy little career going in the early eighties, with the hits "Sailing," "Ride Like the Wind," and the theme to Dudley Moore's film "Arthur." His time in the limelight ended with the arrival of MTV, but Cross has continued to make distinctively plangent soft rock. May 17: The **Tubes,** from San Francisco, gained fame three decades ago with garish and profane stage shows. But they were not just spectacle-loving rockers with a flair for leather. They deftly merged power pop and hard rock, and had a No. 1 hit in 1983, "She's a Beauty." Since then they've disbanded, reunited, and returned to the nostalgia circuit. May 18: **"Moogfest"** (see This Week).

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 13: The **Dirty Dozen Brass Band** are New Orleans revisionists who put the stomp into everything they play, from Jelly Roll Morton to Michael Jackson. Their new album, "Funeral for a Friend," a tribute to the New Orleans jazz-funeral tradition, has become an unexpected eulogy for their longtime tuba player Anthony (Tuba Fats) Lacen, who died shortly after the album was recorded. May 15: The veteran New York City rocker **Garland Jeffreys.**

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—May 15: The West Texas group the **Transgressors** take their name from a pulp novel by James Thompson and traffic in odes to murder and mayhem.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—May 15: **50 Foot Wave** sounds like it should be a surf-rock band, but it's actually the new outfit led by Kristin Hersh. The former Throwing Muses vocalist puts aside the mostly acoustic songs of her recent solo career in favor of heavier rock tunes.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—May 13: **50 Foot Wave** (see Maxwell's). May 14: **Bobby Bare, Jr.,** is the son of the well-known country outlaw, and in the past he has sung about the perils of being a second-generation singer (the older guys have used up all the good ideas). He's moved beyond that on his latest release, "From the End of Your Leash," which includes an energetic horn section.

PIANOS
158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—May 17: The **Bo-Keys,** a mostly instrumental funk-and-soul group led by a twenty-eight-year-old bass player named Scott Bomar, looks to such famous R. & B. instrumental groups as the Bar-Kays, the Mar-Keys, and Booker T. & the MGs for inspiration. The band features noted players, including Charles (Skip) Pitts, the guitarist who put the wah-wah in Isaac Hayes's "Theme from Shaft."

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—May 18: A night of old-school hip-hop with **KRS-One, Chuck D, Big Daddy Kane,** and **Curtis Blow.**

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—May 13: New York's **Radio 4** shamelessly appropriate the sound and aesthetic of the British post-punk movement (their name is an allusion to a Public Image Ltd. track). The retrophilia notwithstanding, Radio 4 play a bracing blend of tense guitar rock.

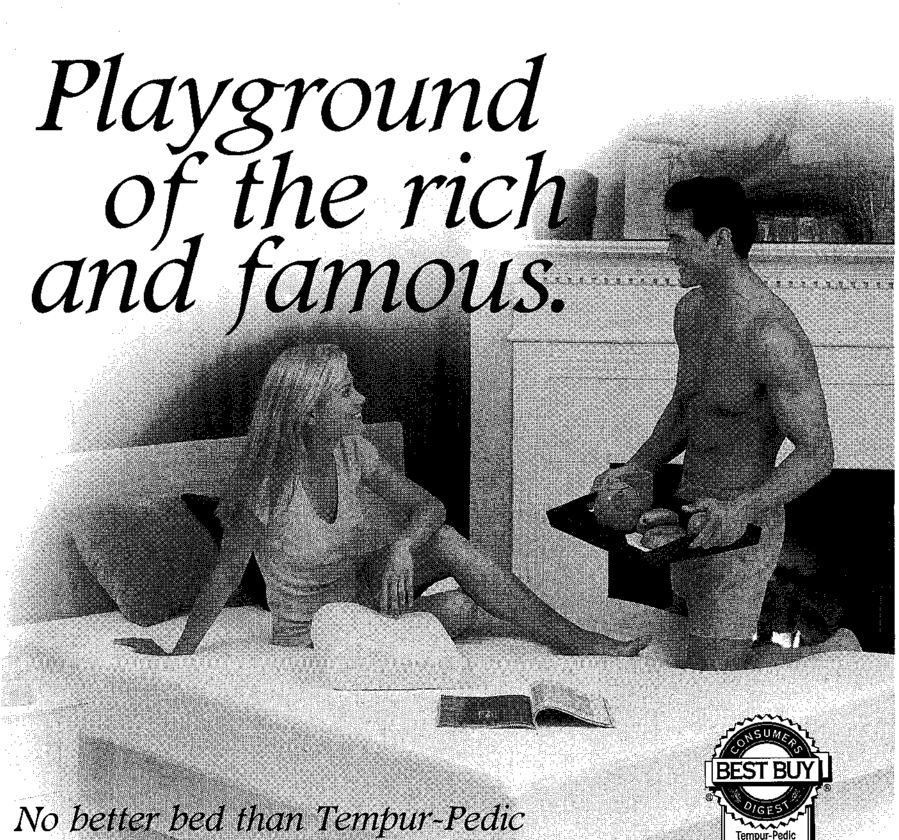
JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through May 16: The remarkably versatile singer-pianist **Diane Schuur,** who is equally at home with forties standards, R. & B. wails, and sultry torch songs.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through June 26, **Bobby Short.** *All good things must come to an end, and this year* Short will be calling it quits after thirty-five years at the Carlyle. He'll be back for the fall season, but it's best to catch him while you can.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through May 16: **McCoy Tyner,** a commanding piano stylist who's lost little of his fervor and invention, leads a tribute to John Coltrane, with whom he played in the sixties. He's joined this week by the saxophonists **Ravi Coltrane** and **Pharoah Sanders.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—May 14-16: Recent illness has kept the vocal legend **Shirley Horn** from accompanying herself on the piano (**George Mesterhazy** assists here), but she hasn't lost her touch. Her album "May the Music Never End"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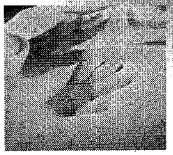

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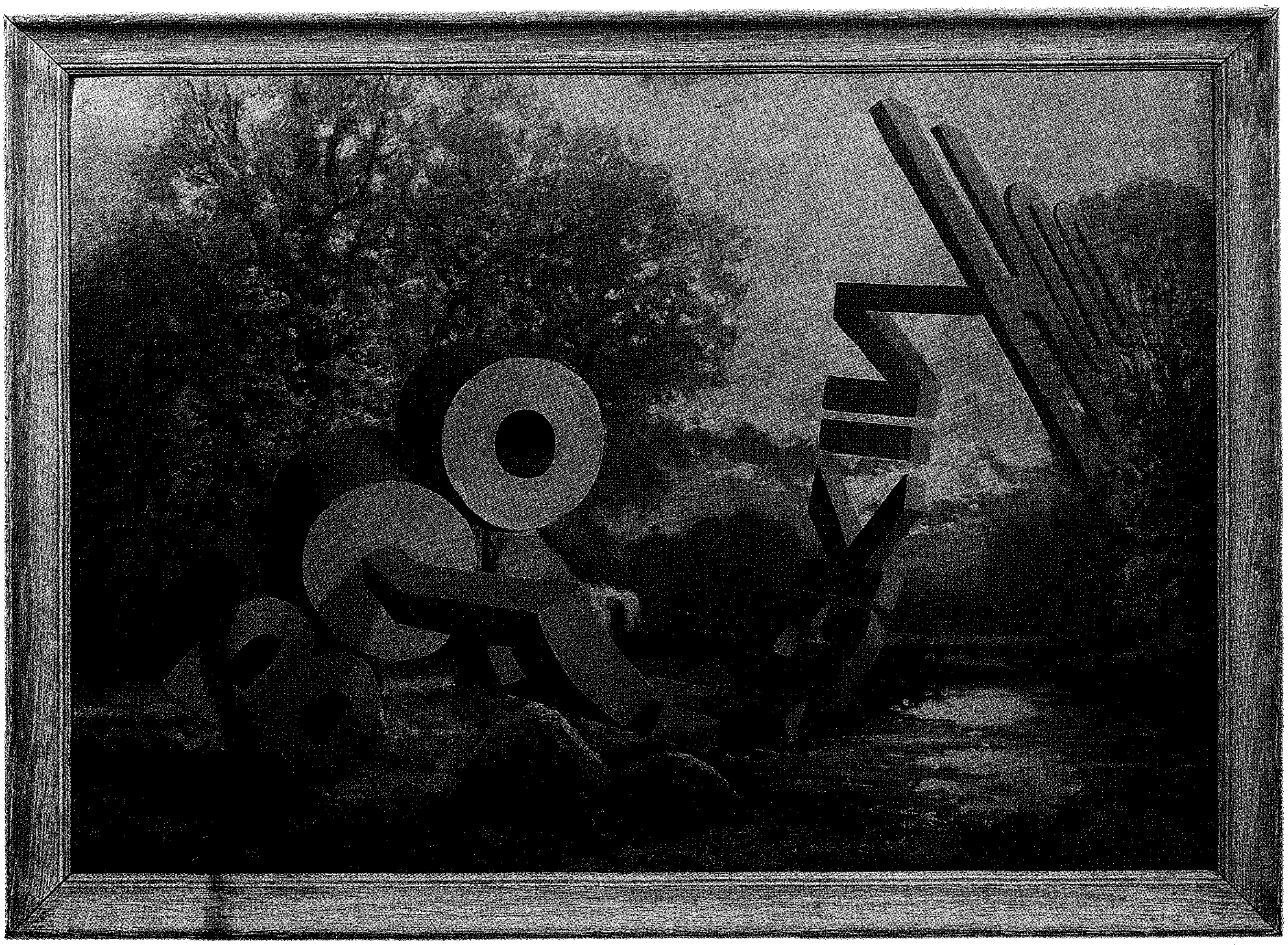
was a highlight of last year. Horn, a minimalist of awesome power, can still flatten an audience with the merest whisper.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—**Delfeayo Marsalis** may be best known as a producer for his regular work with his brothers Branford and Wynton, but he can also wield a pungent trombone. He's here with his sextet May 13-16.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 12: **Jamie Cullum.** Harry Connick, Jr., wannabes are popping up these days as regularly as neo-Dylans did in the sixties and early seventies. Cullum, a cheeky British vocalist with a contemporary edge, favors sharp originals and covers of Radiohead and Jimi Hendrix.



Wayne White's lithographs, which mix text and images, are on view at Clementine through May 22.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—May 13: **Susan Werner,** a clever songwriter and an engaging performer, brings literacy and wit back to popular song on her latest album, "I Can't Be New."

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—May 14-15: The **Randy Brecker** sextet. Brecker's been a ubiquitous presence on jazz and pop recordings for nearly forty years, but to take him for granted would be to miss out on one of the most assured trumpeters of his generation. He's joined by his saxophone-playing wife, Ada Rovatti.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through May 16: **Wycliffe Gordon,** a veteran of the Wynton Marsalis band, set his blustery trombone against the purr of a Hammond organ last year on the album "Dig This!!" He won't have an old-school keyboard with him here, but he will bring his Southern charm. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

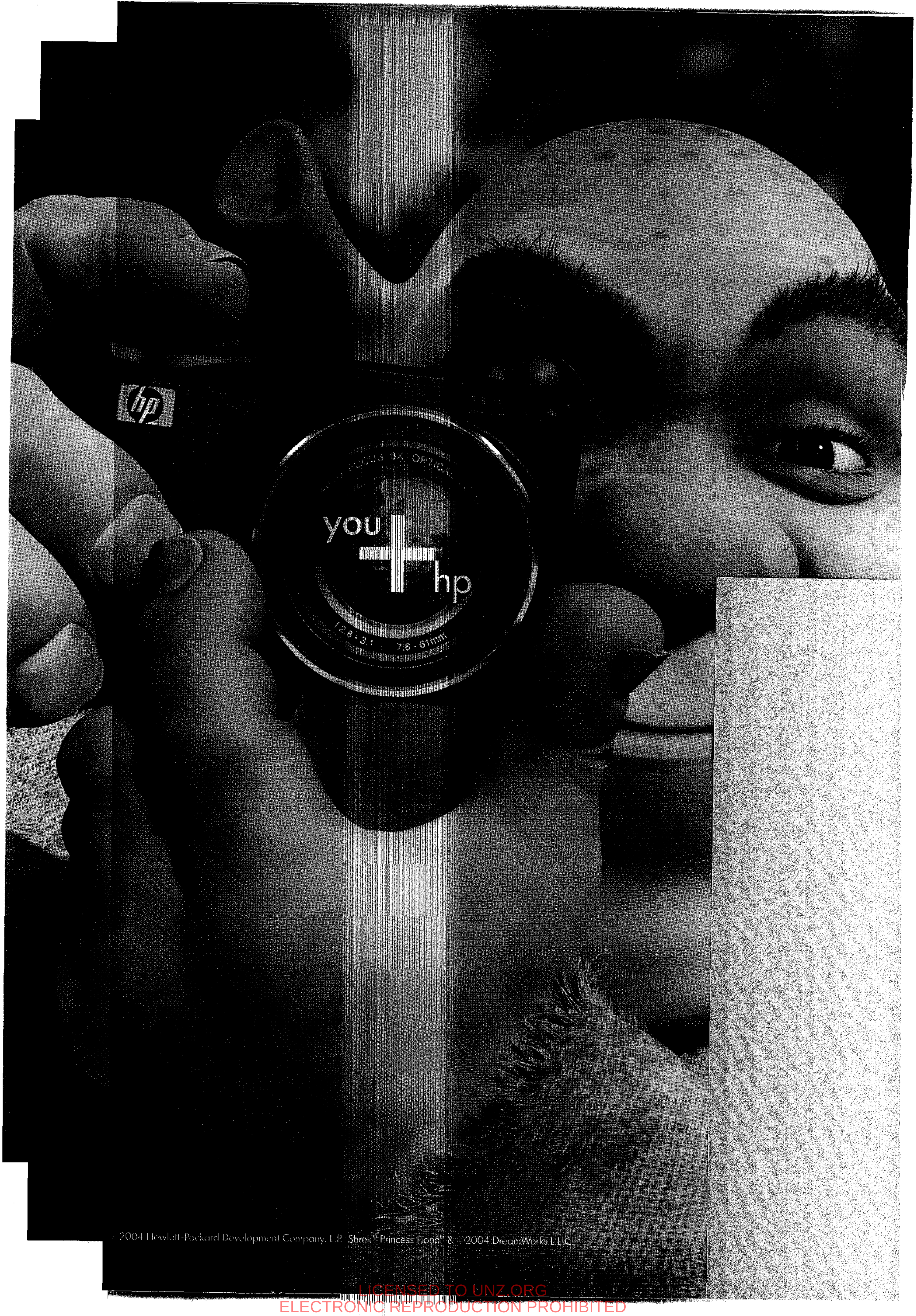
ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—After having lived here since 1964 and having proposed, at various times, to "wrap" MOMA, the Whitney, and several office buildings around town, Christo and his wife-collaborator, Jeanne-Claude, finally have the go-ahead on a project in Manhattan. For sixteen days in February, 2005, the couple will install seventy-five hundred orange fabric gates at twelve-foot intervals along twenty-three miles of pedestrian pathways in Central Park. **"Christo and Jeanne-Claude: The Gates, Central Park, New York"** documents the genesis of the project—begun in 1979—including photographs, working drawings and collages, maps, and samples of the hardware for the sixteen-foot-tall gates. Through July 25. ♦ A jewel of a show, **"Klee: The Late Years"** vivifies a great artist whose prestige has suffered from generations of imitators who probably no longer know who they're imitating. Through June 27. ♦ **"Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)."** Through July 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—**"Roth Time,"** a gargantuan retrospective of the late, under-known German-Swiss artist Dieter Roth, is on view at MOMA and in a smaller show at its affiliate, P.S. 1. Roth emerged after the Second World War as a gifted draftsman à la Paul Klee, proceeded through phases of inventive geometric and kinetic work, and then, influenced by Jean Tinguely and Fluxus, became an installational wild man, using innumerable mediums (frequently, cast chocolate) to colonize the world with a kind of participatory narcissism. Did Roth liberate his considerable talent, or trash it? Through June 7. ♦ **"Humble Masterpieces,"** a collection of a hundred and twenty-two well-designed objects either drawn from the museum's collection (such as a Post-it note) or under consideration for acquisition (such as M&M's). Through Sept. 27. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Singular Forms (Sometimes Repeated)"** fills the museum with classic minimalist and post-minimalist art of the last half century, exalting what is still the chief aesthetic of our age. Emphasizing a "reductive" sensibility—a qualifier rarely used since the nineteen-sixties—the curators smooth over theoretical antagonisms between sculpture (Judd, Andre, Flavin) and painting (Kelly, Ryman, Marden), thus giving weight to latter-day hybrid modes (Richter, Ray, Gober). Sumptuously seductive for all its austerities, the show reminds us that minimalism brought about a revolution in the decorative arts. Through May 19. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—A startlingly good Biennial banishes the gloom that has long beset the Whitney's programs on contemporary art. Painting and drawing reign. Handmade pictures exercise a gravitational tug on practically everything in the show, including sculptures, installations, videos, photographs, films, and digital animation. Paintings by younger artists like Elizabeth Peyton, Laura Owens, and Lecia Dole-Recio exchange energy with those by veterans like David Hockney, Mel Bochner, and Robert Mangold. Video installation emerges as a fully mature art form in strong works by Catherine Sullivan, Craigie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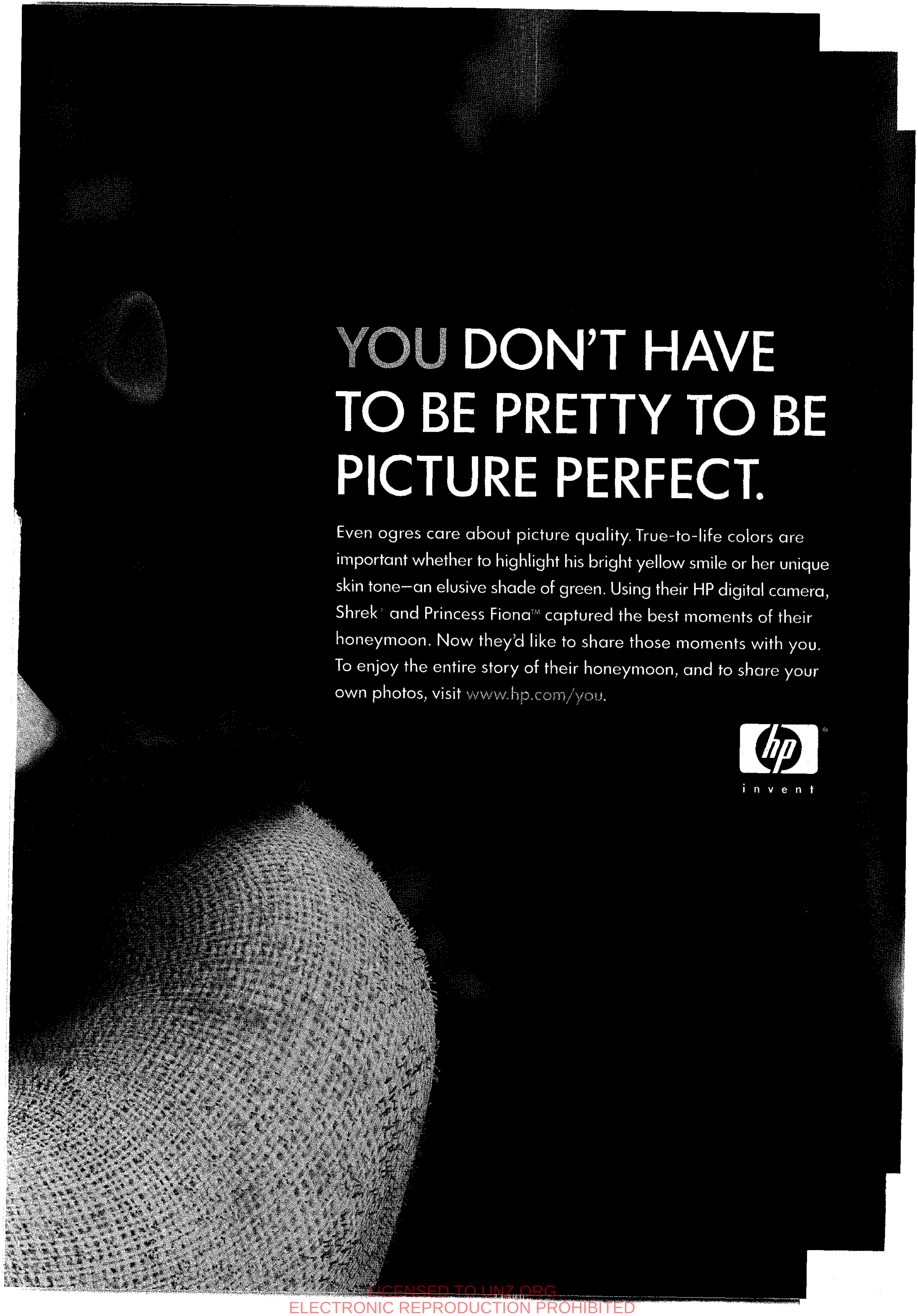

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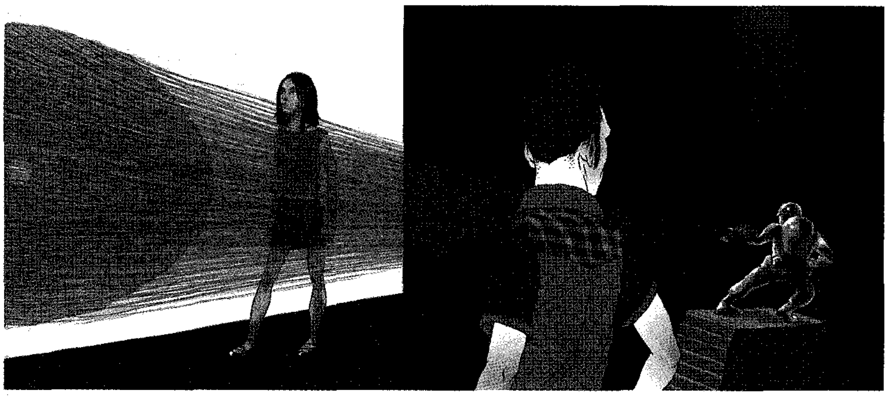
Horsfield, Eve Sussman, and Slater Bradley. Installational hybrids of painting and sculpture—dominant in the past decade—show signs of exhaustion; an exception is a delightful neo-psychedelic disco by a group called assume vivid astro focus. Through May 30. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—A de-facto borough biennial, the sprawling survey **"Open House: Working in Brooklyn"** has three hundred works by two hundred artists in every conceivable medium. Éminences grises (Vito Acconci, Martha Rosler) are surrounded by mainstays of the Williamsburg art community (Fred Tomaselli, Roxy Paine) and up-and-comers born in the nineteen-seventies (Amy Cutler, Kirsten Hassenfeld). Inevitably, the show is a bit of a hodgepodge, with a surprising emphasis on easel painting. But the eclecticism generates ample electricity—the show is likely to become a landmark. Through Aug. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

SUSAN HARTNETT
The hardy plein-air artist presents calligraphic work in paint, pastel, and charcoal, splitting the difference between the meditative style of Chinese ink drawing and the bravura gestures of de Kooning and Pollock. She manages this trick by concentrating, over and over, on windblown dune grasses; the results are, at their best, airy and complicated. Hartnett dutifully renders her subject while gently mocking both the long-gone Ab-Ex boldness and her own Sunday-painter perseverance. Through May 15. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 212-223-2227.)



The Korean artist Do-Ho Suh's installation "Paratrooper-I," at Lehmann Maupin.

TOMER HANUKA

NANCY LORENZ
The artist, who went to high school in Japan and worked for an Asian-art restorer after college, uses elaborate lacquers and inlays in works that play with pretty motifs from Hokusai to Bridget Riley. The two-part show features twelve panels of Taoist opulence covering the walls of James Graham's Chelsea branch as well as a series of technical studies uptown; the latter are hit-or-miss decorative works that present nature as a sort of blissful background music. Both shows through May 15. (1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St., 212-535-5767; 505 W. 28th St., 212-564-7662.)

Short List

LUCIEN FREUD
Acquavella, 18 E. 79th St.
212-734-6300. Through May 27.

JEFF KOONS
C&M, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020.
Through June 5.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

JOE ANDOE
Cowboy noir with a fashionista twist. Andoe's paintings give us long-haired girls with beer cans between their legs, sharp-finned sedans disappearing down dark highways, even a dappled fawn curled up in an unhealthily green meadow. His brushwork is vigorous and highly lacquered, but thinly scrubbed and laconic, too, with an emphasis on smoky grays and browns. This makes for paintings that are both languorously innocent and almost irritatingly knowing, since all the Route 66 pathos is, of course, in quotation marks. Through May 15. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 212-929-0500.)

LORNA SIMPSON
One actress plays two different women in "Corridor," the split-screen video at the center of this show. On the left, she's dressed in Colonial garb and moves around a shingled seventeenth-century Boston-area house. On the right, she's a chic mid-century matron in a house designed by Walter Gropius. An African-American woman plays the roles, which provokes thoughts about race and history. Through June 5. (Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)

DEVORAH SPERBER
Holbein's "Ambassadors," with its anamorphic *vanitas* skull, and Vermeer's "The Music Lesson," reputedly composed with a camera obscura, have been digitally translated and re-created with "pixels" made of commonplace materials like spools of thread and pipe cleaners. The familiar images appear when viewed through a clear acrylic sphere or as a reflection in a stainless-steel cylinder. Through May 28. (McKenzie, 511 W. 25th St. 212-989-5467.)

WAYNE WHITE
Big, blocky letters fill up the negative space in dime-store lithographs, spelling out phrases like "Boo Fuckin Hoo," "Every Time, Every God Damn Time," and "I'll Feng Shui Your Ass Right Out the Door." Don't look for a cogent link between text and image; it's just White's way of blighting the benign Biedermeier landscapes. Insert twenty-five cents in a sculpture cum peep show at the center of the room and you get a brief puppet show featuring the faces of, among others, Bear Bryant, George Wallace, and White's hero, the country singer Roy Acuff. Through May 22. (Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 212-243-5937.)

Short List

AMY CUTLER
Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-255-8450.
Through June 12.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

NANCY BALLIETT
Bonnard-like breakfast tables in bright yellows and plum purples, stands of leafy blue-and-ochre trees, and cathedral-dominated skylines smacked with patches of lipstick red—Balliett's evocations of Nantucket and Venice, in oil paintings and pastel drawings, are coloristically agitated but atmospherically peaceful. Through May 15. (Atlantic, 40 Wooster St. 212-219-3183.)

ERRÓ
Pop art is usually a celebration of postwar capitalist consumerism, but the Paris-based Icelandic artist Erró offers a dissenting view, seen here in a fifty-year survey of his work. Through July 17. (Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780.)

GERHARD RICHTER
In 1971 in Cologne, Gerhard Richter and Blinky Palermo made a show together—Palermo painted the whole gallery ochre and drew a white border around each wall, while Richter installed a pair of plaster portrait heads, each heavily bedaubed with gray oil paint, depicting Palermo and himself facing off across the otherwise empty room. The walls here are white, but the heads on their plinths re-create the challenging vis-à-vis, while a doll-house-size version of the whole setup looks on. "Two Sculptures for a Room by Palermo" are among the only sculptures Richter has made, and this is the first public showing of the plaster originals since 1971. Through June 26. (Freeman, 560 Broadway. 212-966-5154.)

Short List

VINCENT LAMOUROUX
Brownstone, 39 Wooster St.
212-334-3455. Through May 22.

ELIZABETH PEYTON
Gavin Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258.
Through May 15.

DO-HO SUH
Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St.
212-255-2923. Through June 5.

GALLERIES-BROOKLYN

JENNIFER DALTON
The show "Getting to Know the Neighbors" has an ominious subtitle: "Every Building Listed on the Environmental Protection Agency's List of Regulated Facilities." Nearly four hundred snapshots taken in Brooklyn bear pencilled notations with each site's name, address, and category of potential offense. Dry cleaners and auto-body shops might be expected; it's unsettling to find public schools (hazardous waste) and a community center (air releases). Through May 24. (Plus Ultra, 235 S. 1st St. 718-387-3844.)

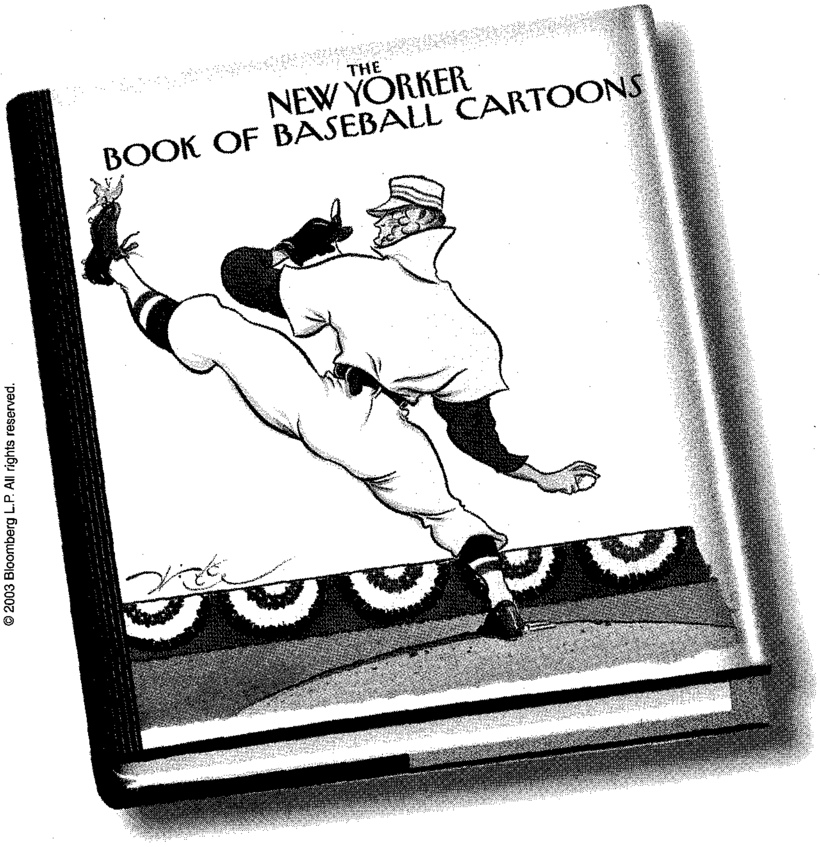
YUN-FEI JI
Sombre scroll paintings set houseboats, laundry baskets, junked cars, old men with shocked expressions, and soldiers with dog faces against the rocky cliffs and gnarled pines of traditional Chinese landscapes. In Ji's narratives of emigration and environmental destruction, the living, the inanimate, and the dead flow into one another like ink soaking through rice paper. Through May 24. (Pierogi, 177 N. 9th St. 718-599-2144.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

ROGER MAYNE
Southam Street, in South London, is at the heart of Mayne's photographs from the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties. The vibrant working-class district was still reeling from damage incurred during the Second World War (like some of Manhattan's West Side "slums," it would be demolished in the nineteen-sixties). In these vintage black-and-white prints, girls dance, boys play soccer, young mothers watch over the chaos. The pictures recall William Klein's and Helen Levitt's American street photography from the same years; Mayne was just as much a master of the decisive moment. The most poignant subjects are the teen-agers, with their fragile teddy boy (and teddy girl) posturing. Through June 5. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

MARTIN PARR
Parr photographs British things: the races at Henley and Ascot, pebbly beaches, clipped hedges, sandals with socks, and flowered hats at garden parties. He

Major League Laughs!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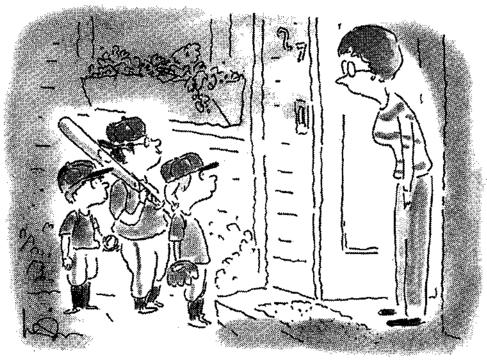

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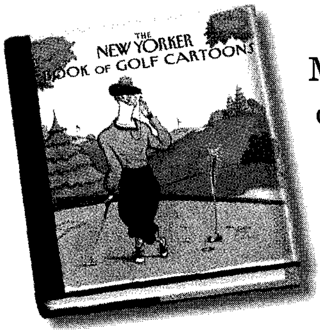
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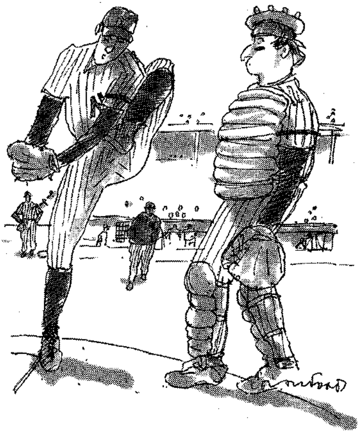

"Gimme a hand—I'm stuck."

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

treads a fine line between comedy and cruelty, with an eye for detail, a hyperrealist sense of color, and a healthy dose of self-mockery. Through May 28. (Janet Borden, 560 Broadway. 212-431-0166.)

DAVID STEPHENSON
Stephenson's photographs gaze directly up at the interiors of domes, flattening them and—through long exposure times—revealing details and colors that can't be discerned in normal viewing. The results are bright, kaleidoscopic patterns made up of the Moorish arabesques of the Alhambra, the iconic decorations of a former imperial chapel near Moscow, and the cool, almost Mediterranean blues of a Hungarian synagogue. The most surprising images come from a quartet of minimalist Eastern European churches. Through May 22. (Julie Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO
A rare chance to see Sugimoto's pictures of dioramas, most of which were taken at the Museum of Natural History in New York. Gorillas, polar bears, and dinosaurs act out, while fur-clad Cro-Magnons and Neanderthals appear oddly pensive. Sugimoto is a master of black-and-white printing, which makes the inclusion of a color version of one of his most famous pictures, an homage to Vermeer's "The Music Lesson," even more startling. It shows a wax tableau in the Amsterdam Madame Tussaud's. Sugimoto's tripod rather than Vermeer's easel is reflected in the mirror. Through June 26. (Yoshii, 17 E. 76th St. 212-744-5550.)

JEFF WALL
Large, backlit transparencies, somewhat like bus-shelter ads. Wall creates and directs (or, at any rate, "collaborates" in) the scenes he photographs. In one picture, an archeologist excavates an Indian site in a lush forest; in another, a woman carries a serving tray along the asphalt walk behind a house. The subjects of these mysteriously banal tableaux are studiously oblivious of the camera. Smaller photographs in one of the gallery's back rooms focus on stains, including a greasy discoloration on the flimsy ceiling panels of a former bakery and patches of blood on a cloth in a parking lot. Through May 29. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

Short List

ANDREAS GURSKY
Matthew Marks, 523 W. 24th St.
212-243-0200. Through June 27.

VIK MUNIZ
Brent Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St.
212-929-2262. Through June 5.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
May 12 at 7 and May 13 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: After viewing hundreds of items in this two-day auction of contemporary art, one might be forgiven for feeling a bit like the man portrayed in lot No. 60, Duane Hanson's "Executive," a workaholic who is so exhausted he can barely see what's in front of him. This sprawling sale includes some of the world's finest (and most expensive) modern art, including works by Rosenquist, Twombly, Schnabel, and Salle, among others. Andy Warhol's mammoth "Last Supper," one of the more outrageous items, features Jesus and his disciples contemplating the crucifixion under the watchful gaze of the Wise potato-chip logo. ♦ May 14 at 10:15 A.M.: An auction of African, Oceanic, and pre-Columbian artifacts. ♦ May 18 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: The spirit of F. Scott Fitzgerald lingers over this sale from the collection of the late Betsy and John Whitney, whose Manhasset estate, Greentree, conjures up East Egg. It comprises a small, carefully chosen selection of fine art, jewelry, and decorative objects, including pen-and-ink illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley, decorated whale teeth, and a Turkish-style carillon clock circa 1775 by George Prior. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
May 12 at 10 A.M. and 2: Christie's completes its largest-ever sale of postwar and contemporary art with two sessions that include works by Duchamp ("Porte Chapeau," a free-floating ring of wooden tendrils) and Hanson ("Old Man Playing Solitaire," an uncomfortably poignant hyperrealist sculpture of the artist's father). ♦ May 18 at 10 A.M.: A firmly benevolent image of George Washington—as painted by Charles Willson Peale, circa 1780-82, and expected to bring up to four million dollars—dominates a sale of American paintings, drawings, and sculpture. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

PHILLIPS
May 13 at 7 and May 14 at 11 A.M.: The hip but unreliable auction house musters an impressive collection of contemporary art for its latest sale, including works by Stella, Basquiat, Hirst, and Salle. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL TRIBAL AND TEXTILE ARTS SHOW
With its longtime space restrictions at the 7th Regiment Armory now lifted, this year's event will showcase a fuller range of textile specialists and international exhibitors, as well as a pair of designer showrooms created by the designers Alon Langotsky and Linda Pastorino. (Park Ave. at 67th St. 212-472-1180. May 15-17.)

"Goalie, Brindley Road, Paddington, London, 1956," by Roger Mayne, at Gitterman (see Photography).

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

CIRQUE BOOM: "THE HOFFMANN CIRCUS"
With both the Met and City Opera closed for the season, now's the time to check out the alternative operas that New York has to offer. Among the funkiest is this version of Offenbach's **"Tales of Hoffmann,"** which employs singers, actors, and aerialists in a production that sets Hoffmann's drunken dreams in an actual tavern with brick walls, steel columns, and a cash bar. (UnderWater Theatre, Water Street Restaurant and Lounge, 66 Water St., Brooklyn. 212-868-4444. May 12-15 at 8 and May 16 at 5.)

BRONX OPERA COMPANY
The company, which offers productions with young professional singers backed by a full orchestra and chorus, closes its season with **"La Traviata,"** sung in English. Conrad Chu and Michael Spierman conduct. (Lovinger Theatre, Lehman College, 250 Bedford Park Blvd., west of Jerome Ave. 718-960-8833. May 14-15 at 8.)

NEW YORK OPERA PROJECT
It's high time that the Met took back **"Vanessa,"** the darkly elegant melodrama by Barber and Menotti that the house premièred in 1958 (and which went on to win the Pulitzer Prize). In the meantime, impatient listeners can head to Christ and St. Stephen's Church for an intimate concert version, with a cast featuring Susan Foster, Rosa Maria Pascarella, and Mark Schowalter; John W. Simmons is the conductor and pianist. (120 W. 69th St. 212-749-6603. May 16 at 7.)

POCKET OPERA PLAYERS: "A GARDEN OF EATON"
John Eaton, one of America's most resilient microtonal mavericks, has concentrated much of his energy on perfecting the "pocket opera," in which singers and players (some with electronic instruments) interact in quirky small-scale dramas—some whimsical, others not. A mini-festival in his honor features a double bill of **"Pinocchio"** and **"Antigone,"** both premières. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460. May 18-19 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Charles Ives, America's first great composer, died fifty years ago, and the Philharmonic is commemorating his passing with a three-week festival that puts the rebellious genius together with composers he admired (or who admired him). The conductor David Robertson opens the festival, leading the orchestra in music by Copland (the jazzy Piano Concerto, with Garrick Ohlsson), Debussy ("Nuages" and "Fêtes," from "Nocturnes"), and Varèse, along with three Ives masterpieces ("Decoration Day," "Washington's Birthday," and "Variations on 'America' "). (May 13 at 7:30, with a shorter "rush hour" concert on May 12 at 6:45.) ♦ The young American conductor Alan Gilbert, the new music director of Santa Fe Opera (and the son of two Philharmonic musicians), conducts songs by Mahler, Ives, and Copland (sung by the baritone Nathan Gunn and the Dessoff Choirs), Berg's formidable Three Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 6, and Ives's fantastically complex (and radiantly serene) Symphony No. 4. (May 15 at 8 and May 19-20 at 7:30.) ♦ Daniel Barenboim, surely on the short list as a successor to Lorin Maazel, breezes into town for the kind of punchy, Germanic program that he likes to do with the Chicago Symphony (from which he has recently announced his departure): Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major (conducting from the piano) and Bruckner's Symphony No. 4, "Romantic." He hasn't conducted the orchestra in thirteen years, and on this flyby, he'll do it only once. (May 18 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

LOUIS ANDRIESSEN FESTIVAL
Lincoln Center brings out the big guns to wrap up its tribute to Holland's minimalist master. May 12 at 8: The Orkest de Volharding—an amazing wind-

and-brass ensemble that combines Dutch precision with American sass—is the house band for an evening of Andriessen collaborations, including "M Is for Man, Music, Mozart" (with a video by Peter Greenaway), "Workers Union," and "Y Después" (a film based on a text by Lorca, with choreography by Betsy Torenbos). (John Jay Theatre, Tenth Ave. at 58th St.) ♦ May 15 at 8: David Robertson, who cut his teeth on the European new-music circuit before landing the directorship of the St. Louis Symphony, conducts the London Sinfonietta in two works influenced by experiences of the First World War: Andriessen's arrangement of Casella's satiric "Pupazzetti" and the composer's own "La Passione," a setting (with solo voice and violin) of texts by the Italian poet Dino Campana. (Alice Tully Hall.) (For tickets to all events, call 212-721-6500. ♦ Note: Andriessen will accompany the jazz vocalist Greetje Bijma at the Kaplan Penthouse in an improvised cabaret concert on May 14 at 9.)

NEW YORK COLLEGIUM
Andrew Parrott, the early-music orchestra's renowned music director, closes the season with a celebration of Henry Purcell, a composer who brought his talents equally to the court, the chamber, the theatre, and the church. The soprano Jolle Greenleaf, the baritone Thomas Meglioranza, and members of the American Boychoir, among others, are on hand for a program that includes the "Ode to St. Cecilia" and excerpts from "The Indian Queen." (Society for Ethical Culture Concert Hall, 2 W. 64th St. 212-717-9246. May 14 at 8.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA
James Levine braces the first of three Carnegie Hall concerts with two mighty columns of music: Schoenberg's turbulent tone poem "Pelleas und Melisande" (which will challenge even this great orchestra) and Brahms's more subdued Fourth Symphony. In between, the mezzo-soprano Olga Borodina sings a rather decadent rarity—the orchestral version of Hugo Wolf's setting of Goethe's "Kennst du das Land." (212-247-7800. May 16 at 3.)

RECITALS

ANIKA VAVIC
The Serbian pianist, long based in Vienna, offers a program of Mozart, Schubert, Ravel ("Valses Nobles et Sentimentales"), Adams ("China Gates"), and Cage at the sleek little concert hall in the Austrian Cultural Forum. (11 E. 52nd St. 212-319-5300, ext. 222. May 11-12 at 8.)

DAWN UPSHAW AND GILBERT KALISH
Two of America's most penetrating chamber musicians offer a program based in the clean and elegant styles of the French-American axis: songs by Foster, Copland (from the "Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson"), Harbison, Fauré, Debussy ("Chansons de Bilitis"), and Messiaen. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. May 12 at 7:30.)

OLGA KERN
The young Russian pianist (a gold medalist at the 2001 Van Cliburn competition), replacing an indisposed Krystian Zimerman, brings her bright and incisive style to music by Barber (the Sonata), Brahms (the "Handel Variations"), and Rachmaninoff (the "Corelli Variations," along with a bouquet of song transcriptions). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 12 at 8.)

BIAVA STRING QUARTET
The young quartet, winners of the 2003 Naumburg Chamber Music Award, performs music by Mendelssohn, Beethoven (the Quartet in E-Flat Major, Op. 127), and Mason Bates (a première). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. May 12 at 8.)

MATA 2004 FESTIVAL
Young composers from around the globe (and most with an experimentalist aesthetic) gather downtown for a round of music and fellowship, including three concerts at St. Peter's Episcopal Church. The closing event, an evening with George Steel's Vox Vocal Ensemble, will feature new works by Eleanor Sandresky and Nico Muhly along with Bernstein's "Missa Brevis." (346 W. 20th St. 212-563-5124. May 12-13 and May 15 at 8. For more information, see www.musicattheanthology.org.)

TABLES FOR TWO

DAISY MAY'S
Broadway at 39th St. (212-977-1500)—In the last sliver of free space in Golda Meir Square—near a hot-dog man, a shabby fruit cart, a mobile post office, a used-comic-book table, and a baked-potato stand—is a plain brown chili cart owned by Adam Perry Lang, who cooked for several years under Daniel Boulud at Le Cirque and Daniel. There are three food options on the chalkboard and one drink—a thirty-two-ounce plastic container of sweetened cardamom iced tea. The sandwiches—pulled pork and beef brisket—are well spiced but require a troublesome amount of assembly. (The meat and the bun come wrapped separately.) The thing to get is the "bowl o' red," a paper cup full of real Texas-style chili. Tender chunks of beef swim in a brick-red sauce made from whole-pod ancho, chipotle, and New Mexican Hatch chiles. The chili is served hot—the side of shredded cheddar cheese melts on contact—and is just spicy enough to make your eyes water a bit. A tortilla comes on the side. The tea, which has a big sprig of fresh mint in it, goes great with the chili, though it's a challenge to balance while you're trying to wipe up the last slick of grease with the tortilla.

The square starts to get busy with a lunch crowd around 11:30 A.M., when the construction workers break. Most of them bring their own food, and you can spot a few killing off their hour with cigars or Budweiser tall boys in brown bags. The U.P.S. guys eat closer to two, and like to shoot baskets with their trash. In between there's a lot of hurried munching—people eating while they're still walking, while they're on the phone, while they work from briefcases.

Lang has carts on Wall Street and on Sixth Avenue at 50th Street, and plans to open six more in the next month or so. There's also a takeout storefront near the U.S.S. Intrepid, on Eleventh Avenue at 46th Street, where, in addition to chili, they sell terrific barbecued ribs: authentic Memphis dry rub and very wet Oklahoma and Kansas City styles. There, the cardamom iced tea comes in an actual Mason jar. (Open weekdays for lunch. $6-$8.)

—*Owen Phillips*

CYGNUS ENSEMBLE
The intellectual density of Ralph Waldo Emerson's poetry has tended to scare off potential composers—except for the intrepid few whose music is part of a concert celebrating the philosopher's two-hundredth birthday. The program includes songs on Emerson texts by Ives and Robert Martin, songs on John Hollander texts by Babbitt and Carter ("Of Challenge and of Love," performed by the soprano Lucy Shelton and the pianist Stephen Gosling), and instrumental works by Cage and the guitarist David Starobin. Hollander will be on hand to offer comments and reflections. (Ethical Culture Society Concert Hall, 2 W. 64th St. 212-279-4200. May 13 at 7.)

BARGEMUSIC
Olga Bloom's hardy little outfit has been attracting some big-name talent of late—including the pianist Dmitri Alexeev. May 13 at 7:30 and May 16 at 4: The violinist Mark Peskanov, the violist Yuri Gandelsman, and the cellist Leonid Gorochov join Alexeev in music by Mozart and Brahms (the Piano Quartet in G Minor). ♦ May 14-15 at 7:30: Alexeev offers a solo recital of piano works by Brahms, Schumann (the "Études Symphoniques"), Chopin, and Rachmaninov. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

"FREE FOR ALL AT TOWN HALL": VLADIMIR FELTSMAN
The price-is-right concert series, presented by Omus Hirshbein and Jacqueline Taylor, begins its second season with a program of Bach, Beethoven, Ligeti, and Liszt performed by the formidable Russian-American pianist. (123 W. 43rd St. May 16 at 5. Free tickets, with a maximum of two per person, will be distributed beginning at noon on the day of the concert.)

ANONYMOUS 4
The immaculate all-female vocal ensemble, having revolutionized a corner of the early-music industry, says farewell to New York with—what else?—music by Hildegarde of Bingen. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. May 16 at 7.)

PIERRE-LAURENT AIMARD
The increasingly visible French pianist, still at his best with contemporary scores, plays a masterwork by Carter ("Night Fantasies") and gives a nod to Ives (with the "Concord Sonata"). (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. May 17 at 7:30.)

THE ORGAN MUSIC OF NED ROREM
Gregory D'Agostino, performing on the Riverside Church organ (an exotic monster of an instrument dreamed up by Virgil Fox), completes his two-concert survey of Rorem's complete organ music, including such works as "A Quaker Reader" (his magnum opus for the instrument). (Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 212-870-6722. May 18 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

REV.99
This conglomerate of audio- and videophiles began in the back room of Freddy's bar in Brooklyn, creating an onscreen circus they call "improvised TV." V.J.s and musicians feed images and sounds to two editors, sitting at a table surrounded by wires and hardware, who mix it all into a multimedia collage. Vintage cartoon strips fade into B movies pasted onto televangelist rants, interrupted by eerie murmurs of dialogue. The blurry chaos of sensory overload, which looks like psychedelic channel-surfing, is punctuated (and made riveting) by remarkable juxtapositions, unexpected motifs, and clever satire. (Anthology Film Archives, Second Ave. at 2nd St. For more information, call 212-505-5181. May 14 at 9:30.)

GOING COASTAL
The local nonprofit celebrates the publication of a guide to the New York City waterfront (see This Week). (South Street Seaport, Pier 16, East River at Fulton St. For more information, call 212-748-8735, or visit www.goingcoastal.org. May 13 at 6.)

"FASHION ON FULTON"
Seventeen designers from the county of Kings show their wares in the rotunda of the Brooklyn Museum, which is currently presenting a retrospective of the work of Patrick Kelly, a pioneering African-American designer who died at age forty of AIDS, in 1990. (200 Eastern Parkway. For more information, call 718-625-4545, ext. 130. May 13 at 6.)

READINGS
May 12 at 8: "Tag Team Fiction," a reading series in which two authors present a story they wrote together, celebrates its one-year anniversary with readings by Lauren Grodstein and Aaron Hamburger, Matthew Derby and Shelley Jackson, and others. (Happy Ending Bar, 302 Broome St., between Forsyth and Eldridge Sts. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 13 at 6: Sophie Cabot Black, Gary Lutz, and Allison Hoffman read from their contributions to the latest issue of *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art.* (Coliseum Books, 11 W. 42nd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 16 at 4: Meghan Dailey, Rachel King, Brendan O'Malley, and other contributors to the online literary journal *Flâneur* read from their work. (Slipper Room, 167 Orchard St., at Stanton St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 17 at 7:30: The jazz pianist Cecil Taylor reads from his poetry. (55 Bar, 55 Christopher St. 212-929-9883.)

TALK
May 13 at 7: Lawrence Weschler, the director of the New York Institute for the Humanities, moderates a discussion about the Yeshiva University Museum's current show, "Vienna: Jews and the City of Music, 1870-1938," with the conductor Leon Botstein, the *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross, and the history professor Michael P. Steinberg. (Center for Jewish History, 15 W. 16th St. For more information, call 212-294-8330.)

MOVIES OPENING

BREAKIN' ALL THE RULES
A comedy about a man (Jamie Foxx) who gets dumped by his fiancée and then writes a best-selling book about how to break up with women. Daniel Taplitz wrote and directed. Opening May 14.

CARANDIRU
Hector Babenco directed this drama based on the true story of Dr. Drauzio Varella, a celebrated oncologist who decided to treat the inmates of a São Paulo prison. In Portuguese. Opening May 14.

COFFEE AND CIGARETTES
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening May 14. (Sunshine Cinema.)

SLAVES OF THE SWORD: ARIEL SHARON
Paul Jenkins directed this documentary about the political life of the Israeli Prime Minister. It will be shown with "The Junction," a documentary about a Palestinian man and an Israeli soldier who were killed at the same intersection. Opening May 13. (Anthology Film Archives.)

A SLIPPING DOWN LIFE
An adaptation of the Anne Tyler novel in which a Southern woman (Lili Taylor) working at an amusement park develops an obsessive crush on a struggling rock musician (Guy Pearce). Written and directed by Toni Kalem. Opening May 14.

STRAYED
In a drama set during the beginning of the Second World War, Emmanuelle Béart plays a French widow fleeing Paris with her two children. Directed by André Téchiné. Opening May 14. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

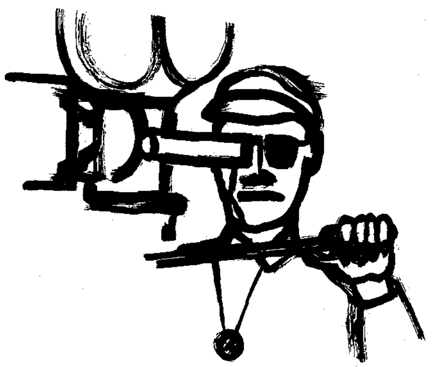
TROY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 14.

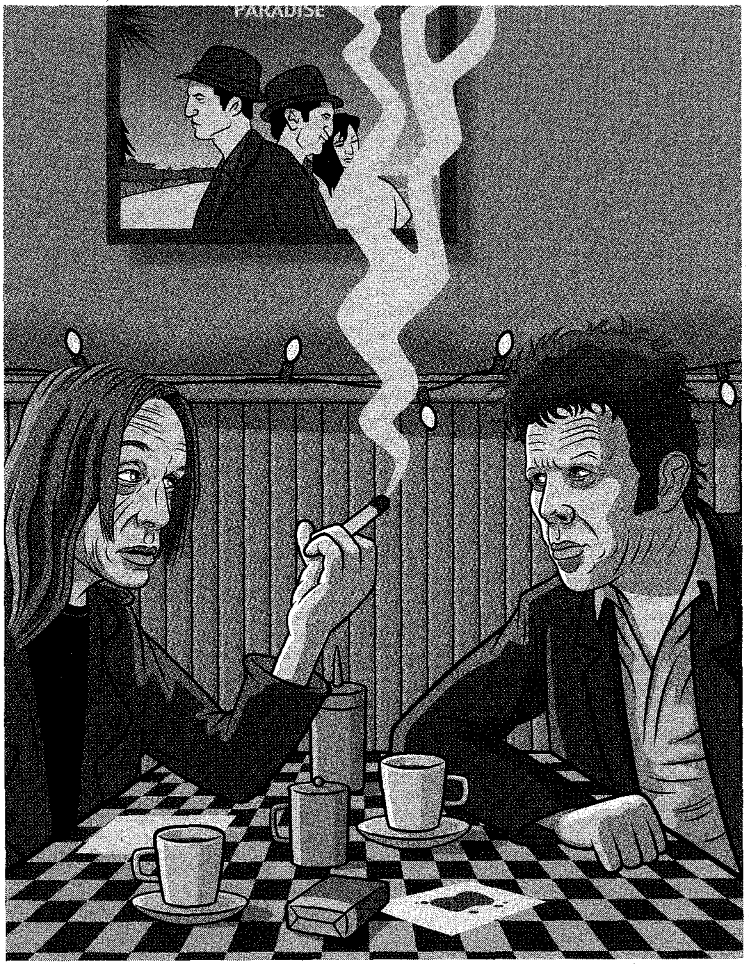
THE 24TH DAY
A married man (Scott Speedman) discovers that he's H.I.V. positive and decides to take revenge on the lover (James Marsden) who may have infected him. Tony Piccirillo wrote and directed. Opening May 14. (Village East Cinemas.)

WITH ALL DELIBERATE SPEED
Peter Gilbert directed this documentary about the people involved in the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling. Opening May 14.

FILM NOTES

COFFEE AND CIGARETTES
Cinematic doodles from the writer-director Jim Jarmusch. The movie, seventeen years in the making, consists of a series of black-and-white vignettes involving caffeine and nicotine. While those two substances complement each other, Jarmusch, ever the hip mad scientist, throws together odd combinations of actors and singers. Some pairings—like the laconic comic Steven Wright and the Italian yo-yo Roberto Benigni—turn out to be duds, but other encounters—like the one between the hip-hoppers RZA and GZA and a woozy Bill Murray—have a singular, irreproducible chemistry. Jarmusch doesn't have any grand theme; he's just playing around. Steve Coogan (of "24 Hour Party People" fame) and Alfred Molina parody the awkward Hollywood meeting of a rising star and a fading veteran. And best of all is Cate Blanchett, who, thanks to camera trickery, plays both halves of a conversation between a starlet and her resentful, bohemian cousin—she alternates between the slatternly and the prim with only a wig and body language. Finally, the former Warhol associate Taylor Mead gives the film a wonderful valedictory moment when he mysteriously hears Mahler's "I Have Lost Track of the World."—*Michael Agger* (Sunshine Cinema.)





Iggy Pop and Tom Waits in "Coffee and Cigarettes," opening May 14.

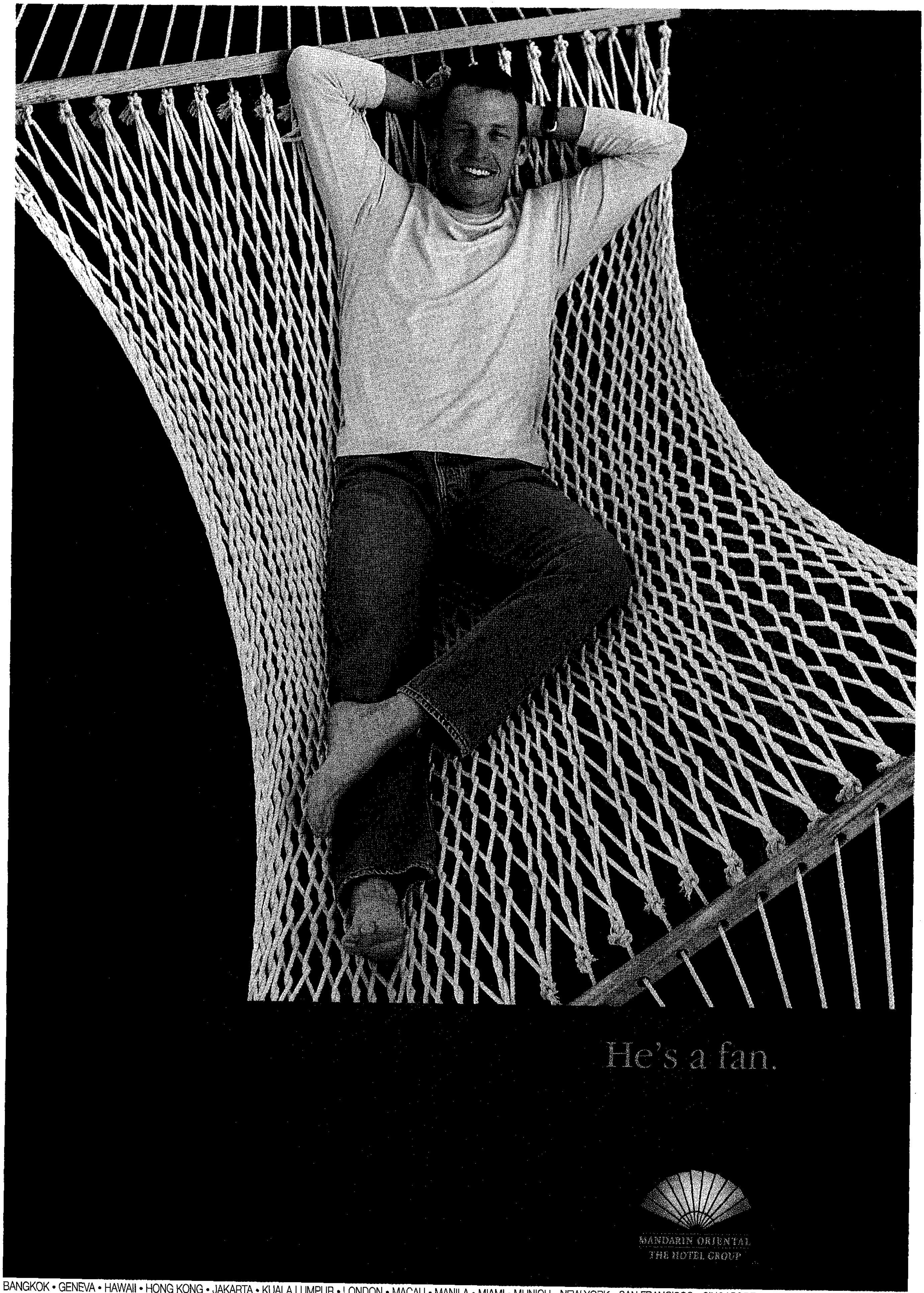
MICHAEL WELDON

DOGVILLE
Pedantic, obtuse, and unwatchable, this three-hour exercise in inept avant-gardism, written and directed by Lars Von Trier, is set in a town without walls, streets, or air—a conceptual Depression-era nowheresville in the American Rockies in which obvious allegories of conformity and viciousness are acted out by a cast reciting an inhuman language into the dead silence. We might be present at a nightmarish school play. With Nicole Kidman as the poor waif who eventually takes her revenge, Paul Bettany as a weak-willed artist, and a variety of other excellent actors submitting to Von Trier's solemnly stupid rituals of betrayal. The pompous narrator is John Hurt, who sounds like Henry Fielding wishing he had a tankard in his hand.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 3/29/04.) (Angelika Film Center.)

ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND
Yes, it's another attempt by the screenwriter Charlie Kaufman to replace the antique notion of cinema as persuasive entertainment with that of cinema as some strange, whirring device for the disorientation of the human brain. Jim Carrey plays Joel and Kate Winslet plays Clementine, who fall in love and out of love and back in love again. Fair enough, but Kaufman and the director, Michel Gondry, run the whole story in rewind, as if to prove the Shakespearean theorem that journeys end in lovers' meeting. Just to complicate the issue, Tom Wilkinson plays a dodgy doctor who can, for a fee, wipe the memory of a chosen individual, adored or otherwise, from your mind—a treatment of which both Joel and Clementine avail themselves. The conceit writhes with implausibility, yet it also gives off flashes of high-tech, low-down beauty, as scenes of tenderness begin to go grievously blank before the sweethearts' eyes. Carrey's latest effort to elude, or at least refine, his loony persona is more sincere than convincing, and it is left to Winslet, at once fierce and footloose, to carry the show. On the eighth viewing, say, the damn thing might even make sense. With Mark Ruffalo, Elijah Wood, and a blissed-out Kirsten Dunst—what is she on?—*Anthony Lane* (3/22/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

GODZILLA
Time has not diminished this movie's tabloid docu-horror allure. H-bomb tests awaken a four-hundred-foot sea dragon and send him wobbling into Tokyo, crushing trains and swatting down fighter planes like a fire-breathing King Kong. The monster is obviously an actor in a rubber suit, but the destruction is smashing in every sense of the word, and the director, Ishiro Honda, ladles out dollops of crude pop poetry, whether in his medieval mode (smoky tableaux of a remote Japanese island) or his futuristic one (an oxygen-depleting chemical sending fish skeletons plummeting to the bottom of a tank). In the underwater climax, the slow-moving Godzilla is as glacially creepy as the dragon in Fritz Lang's "Die Nibelungen." The new print restores forty minutes never before seen in the U.S. and excises Raymond Burr's tacked-on role as an American reporter. The immortal Takashi Shimura ("The Seven Samurai") emerges as the indisputable star. Originally released in 1954. In Japanese.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; May 12-18.)

GOOD BYE, LENIN!
Christiane (Katrin Sass), a saintly East German Communist, falls into a coma just before the Berlin Wall comes down, in 1989. When she awakens, her son, Alex (Daniel Brühl), creates a kind of ersatz reality for her—a living museum of Communism—in which nothing has changed. He gets his cranky sister and a group of embarrassed neighbors to take part in the charade, going so far as to work with a filmmaker buddy on fake news broadcasts about the unending triumphs of a regime that no longer exists. This social satire was directed by Wolfgang Becker, whose background is in TV, and the movie often plays like a series of television-comedy skits, some of them funny and incisive, some larkish and insubstantial. Yet beneath the slapstick surface lies a sombre German heart: the point of the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fable is that Communism in Germany was always an ersatz reality—that for forty years Party leaders were creating a large-scale version of the fiction that Alex creates in his mother's bedroom. In German.—*D.D.* (3/8/04) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

HELLBOY

Ron Perlman is a man born for prosthetics. With his large features and solid but nimble body, he convincingly portrays otherworldly creatures. Here, in the Mexican director Guillermo del Toro's cuckoo comic-book feature, he's a super-sized red demon from hell. The complicated and ultimately senseless plot begins with Hellboy's origins (he was "born" during a Second World War Nazi occult ceremony presided over by Rasputin), then quickly focusses on the modern-day Hellboy and his adventures in fighting some doomsday monsters and the freaks that control them. It's not particularly groundbreaking stuff. Where the film really succeeds is in its dank, almost introspective atmosphere—a del Toro specialty—and in the immensely appealing bravado that Perlman brings to his role. When the movie's story line concentrates on the character of Hellboy and his relationships with those important to him (the man who raised him, the girl he loves), the film becomes a unique romp, with an exciting yet vulnerable superhero at the center who just happens to be the spawn of Satan.—*Bruce Diones* (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

I'M NOT SCARED

A stirring and beautifully made poetic thriller about the natural gallantry of a young boy. Michele (Giuseppe Cristiano), a frisky ten-year-old, is spending a carefree summer in the golden wheat fields of southern Italy when he finds something unaccountable—a tiny, pale creature kept captive in a pit near an abandoned farmhouse. He forms a bond with this ghost, who turns out to be a boy his own age, and decides to feed him and take him out for air. At the same time, Michele tries to penetrate the mysterious goings on at his house, where the adults, including the violent roughnecks his father brings home, quarrel viciously. Like René Clément's classic "Forbidden Games," the movie reveals the sordid behavior of adults as seen through the eyes of half-comprehending but pure-hearted children. The style is at times startlingly freewheeling, as if the events emerged from a child's dream, a storybook world of monsters and rescuers. Adapted by Niccolò Ammaniti and Francesca Marciano from Ammaniti's novel. Directed by Gabriele Salvatores; cinematography by Italo Petriccione. In Italian.—*D.D.* (4/12/04) (Chelsea West, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Empire 25.)

KILL BILL VOL. 2

If the two parts of Quentin Tarantino's movie are ever spliced together, the combined version may work as a kind of gleaming, wafer-thin pop epic. But this film, taken alone, is a shapeless mess, despite its redundant framing device. The Bride (Uma Thurman) continues her revenge from "Vol. 1" against the old friends who did her dirt, the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad (DiVAS). None of it makes much sense (nor is it supposed to)—characters are introduced only to be murdered or dropped, and the visual style alludes promiscuously to martial-arts classics and Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns. If the violence of the first film was a fountains-of-blood spectacle, the violence of this movie is in the taunting, heavy-menace style of old comic books and B movies. What's most shocking about these scenes is not the heartlessness but how bad Tarantino's ear has become. The man who seemed to reinvent writing for the screen in "Pulp Fiction"—pop-surreal, nasty, and blazingly funny—has settled into a pseudo-suave idiom. With Michael Madsen, Darryl Hannah in an eye patch, Gordon Liu in a cotton-candy beard as a supercilious mountaintop kung-fu master, and David Carradine as Bill, who, confronted at last, turns out to be a sonorous bore with tired eyes.—*D.D.* (4/19 & 26/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

LAWS OF ATTRACTION

A tale of two attorneys—how much fun can you pack into one movie? Pierce Brosnan plays the raffish and highly successful Daniel, whereas Julianne Moore plays the uptight and highly successful Audrey. (Somewhere, there must be a screenwriter's software package that creates these setups to order.) Both lawyers are expert in the bitter niceties of divorce, and they keep going head to head in court. They also get drunk one night and wind up going top to toe in bed. They then get drunk again, on a trip to Ireland, and wind up married. There is something insulting in the suggestion that smart people will make dramatic moves only under the influence of alcohol, but, then, the whole of Peter Howitt's movie gives off the reek of condescension—witness the rambling Irish revellers, the outdated British punk (Michael Sheen) whom Daniel represents, and so on. Brosnan seems at ease, Moore is as crackable as fine porcelain, and both of them cast around for funny lines that never come their way. Frances Fisher, playing Audrey's embarrassingly hip mom, fares rather better. "Are you really fifty-six?" she is asked. "Parts of me are," she replies. With Parker Posey.—*A.L.* (5/3/04) (Cinema II, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

MAN ON FIRE

Lurid, blood-soaked, operatic junk. Denzel Washington plays a burned-out government assassin hired to protect a rich businessman's daughter (Dakota Fanning) in Mexico City. The first half of this overlong film deals with the bond that quietly develops between the two, the second with the inevitable kidnapping, which sends Washington on a torrid revenge streak. The director Tony Scott's overblown style is in full flower: the jittery camera and disjointed editing combine to create exquisite audience torture.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

MEAN GIRLS

A new term at high school is even more of a trauma for Cady (Lindsay Lohan) than it is for everybody else, since she is not just an out-of-towner but an out-of-Africa, her parents having raised her as a bush baby. Now she is confronted with the complexity of school loyalties and fads, which—as we are reminded by innumerable slo-mo sequences with an added roartrack—are twice as bloodlusty as the lives of African fauna. Her first friends are Janis (Lizzy Caplan) and Damian (Daniel Franzese), who dare her to hang out with the second wave—a trio of acid beauties, led by the queenly Regina (Rachel McAdams). The twist is that Cady, in pretending to fall for their spoilt ways, really does fall for them, and the problem is that we ourselves never fall for this notion of Cady as weak-willed. Though the movie sags in the second half, your spirits are kept up by the steady flow of slashing lines—courtesy of Tina Fey, who not only wrote the script but also stars as Cady's teacher. If anything, the grownups—especially the school principal, played by Tim Meadows, of whom the picture needs much more—tend to nudge these pushy teen-agers into the wings. The movie, produced by Lorne Michaels and directed by Mark Waters, is often funny, but it was conceived by people who are plainly wiser and more worldly than their target audience, and there's something about that discrepancy that, you know, totally sucks.—*A.L.* (5/10/04) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN

It is twenty-five years since believers everywhere got steamed up by this slice of Python mischief, and the joke—to nobody's surprise—is now firmly on them. In retrospect, this reputedly scurrilous work, aflame with heresy, turns out to be a bundle of schoolboyish jokes, many on the gentle side, and all of them scornful of political and religious excess. Graham Chapman, almost milky in his geniality, plays Brian, who is born down the street from Jesus Christ—so close that the Magi, uncertain about the exact stable over which the star has paused, offer gifts to the wrong babe, then grab them back again. As an adult, Brian becomes a highly reluctant prophet, only to be crucified for his insignificant sins. Most of the lead roles are taken by Python regulars such as John Cleese, Michael Palin, and Terry Jones (who somehow found time, while playing Brian's hag of a mother, to direct the movie as well). Rest assured that the film is not being reissued solely in order to celebrate its birthday. To put the matter in Pythonspeak: Nudge, nudge, Mel Gibson, say no more.—*A.L.* (5/3/04) (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE SADDEST MUSIC IN THE WORLD

Another straightforward slice of corporate entertainment from Guy Maddin. Actually, by his standards this new picture really is close to intelligible. Isabella Rossellini, sporting a wig that appears to have been woven from cold egg noodles, plays Lady Port-Huntly, rich but legless, who runs a competition to discover, as the title suggests, the saddest music in the world. One of her former lovers (Mark McKinney) offers to represent America; he also has a drunken father (David Fox) and a pixielike girlfriend (Maria de Medeiros) who is both amnesiac and nymphomaniac—a far from impractical arrangement, when you consider it. The movie, set in Winnipeg in 1933, is shot with Maddin's habitual blend of jumpiness, spookiness, halation, and archaic levels of scratch and grain. The result does not so much flirt with the ridiculous as lie back and let the ridiculous do more or less what it wants, and Maddin aficionados will ask for nothing more. Once again, however, the unconverted may wonder what the fuss is about; when a director's storytelling is as overheated as this, why should the stories themselves have to be so wildly undercooked?—*A.L.* (5/10/04) (Sunshine Cinema.)

SHAOLIN SOCCER

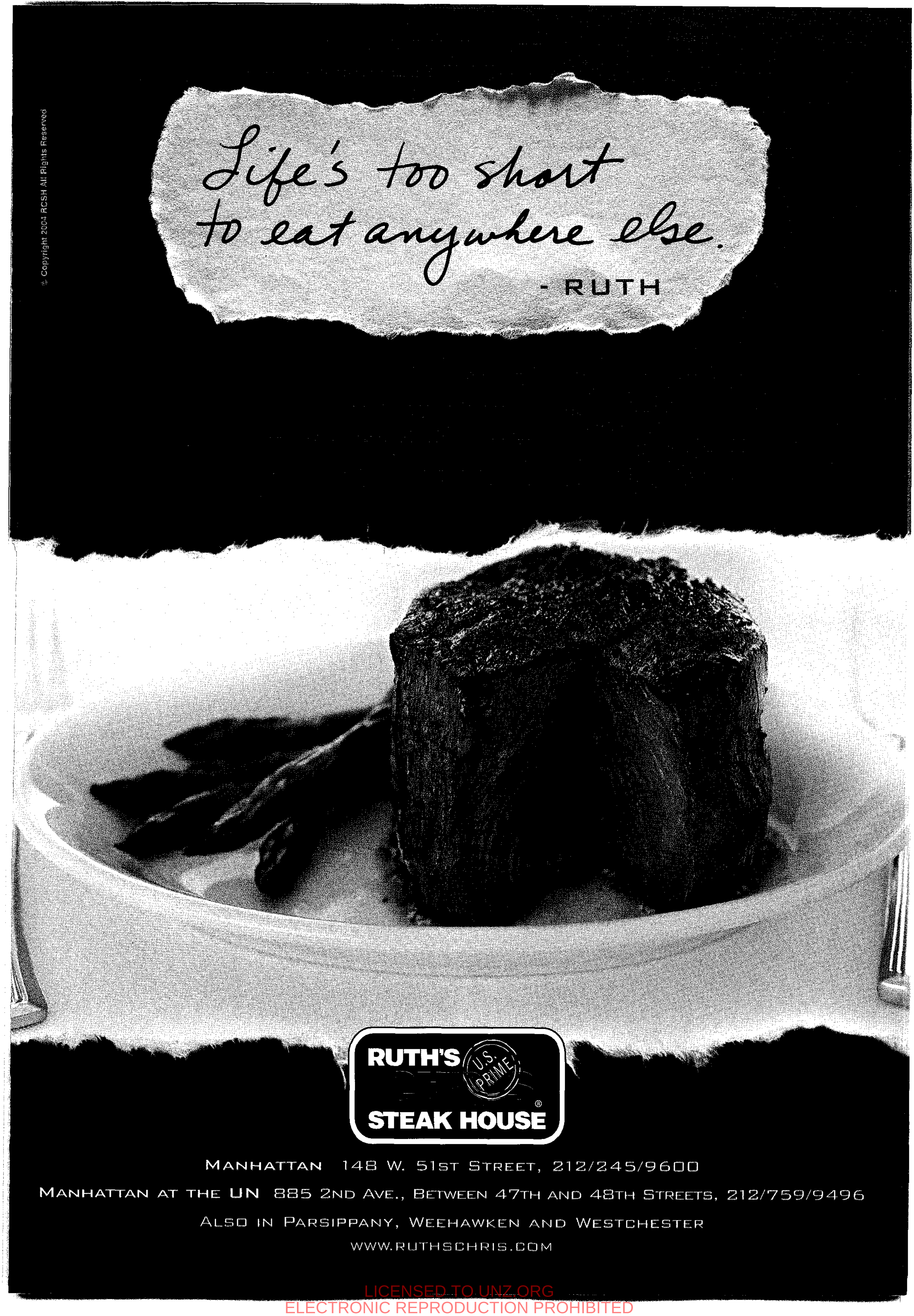
A Hong Kong sports story about two feuding soccer coaches and their F/X-driven teams. The film, centering on the unique talents of a group of kung-fu students from the Shaolin temple and their big game against the players from Team Evil, is a playfully absurd piece of hokum. The director-star, Stephen Chow, introduces his characters through visually witty setups, such as having them break into dance routines or perform high-flying stunts. As the game approaches, the soccer action is like live anime—balls fly through the air and land on the field like meteors, and players spin in the air like tornadoes. The movie has been edited with a cleaver, and not all the gags work, but the primitive moviemaking hucksterism is hard to resist. In Cantonese.—*B.D.* (Empire 25 and Union Square.)

SPRING, SUMMER, FALL, WINTER . . . AND SPRING

A Buddhist monk (Oh Young-soo) and his disciple, a young boy, live in an enchanted setting—a temple set at the center of a very still lake high in the mountains of Korea. The boy grows up, makes mistakes, and receives punishment from his master, but all is calm and orderly until a young woman enters the scene—a disruption that leads to violence and, eventually, to renewal. Kim Ki-duk's movie has a formal grace that is nearly intoxicating: the cinematography revels in the exquisite quiet of the lake, with its natural abundance rendered in a palette of infinitely subtle grays and pale blues. The formal perfection makes one willing to overlook an implicitly priggish rejection of sexuality and the normal glories and temptations of the world outside. And the movie's piety is redeemed by a vagrant and rather subversive sense of humor that keeps the rituals of Buddhist discipline fresh and humanly appealing. In Korean.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

13 GOING ON 30

Jennifer Garner and Mark Ruffalo are pure eye candy in this frothy bit of nonsense about a thirteen-year-old girl who, through a magical movie moment, is propelled into her future self. As another entry in the long list of body-switch comedies, the script deals with the emotional complexities of growing up too soon with a sugary grace that avoids, for the most part, the queasy pitfalls of the character's newfound sexuality. Garner plays the gamine well—she has a knack for teen-age awkwardness. And the director, Gary Winick, han-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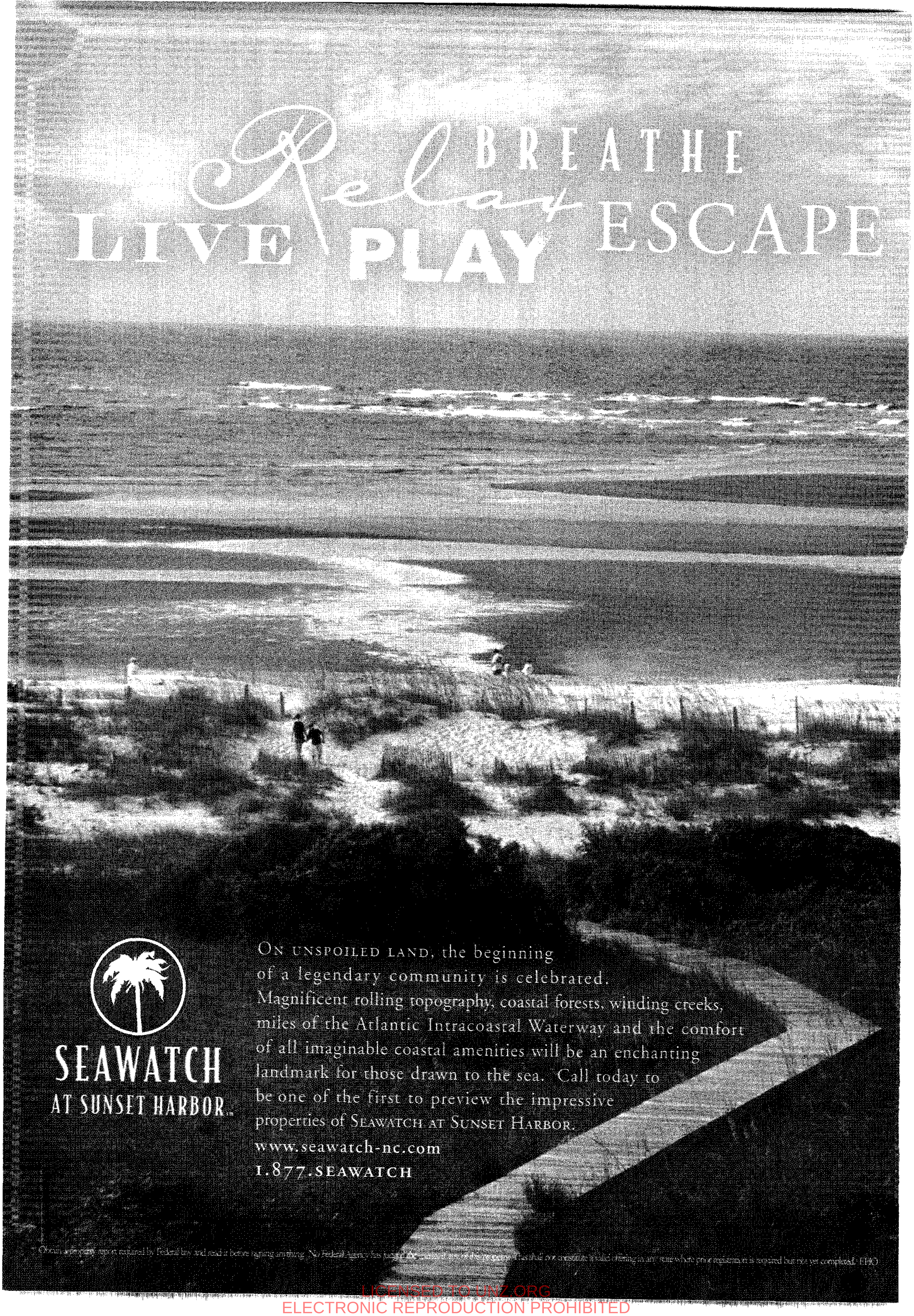

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dles the "Big" conceit loosely enough to keep things fresh.—*B.D.* (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

WINTER KILLS
This satirical phantasmagoria from 1979 fits snugly into today's political paranoia. Based on a novel by Richard Condon, the author of "The Manchurian Candidate," it tries to do for the American father what the earlier Condon work did for the American mother, while assembling a jagged conspiracy jigsaw puzzle that's wilder than anything Oliver Stone might concoct. Jeff Bridges plays the half-brother of the assassinated President Kegan; John Huston struts away with the movie as the rip-snorting head of the Kegan clan. If the writer-director, William Richert, sees America as putty in the hands of mobsters, industrialists, and information brokers, at least it's Silly Putty. Richert takes so many potshots at favorite New Left targets (including the New Frontier) that he might be satirizing paranoia itself, and with Huston, Richard Boone, and Sterling Hayden in key roles, the film becomes a parody of movie machismo, especially when Huston roams around his mansion in a white Oriental robe and skimpy red drawers.—*M.S.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; May 12.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE AGRONOMIST
BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.

BON VOYAGE (3/29/04)
Quad Cinema, 62nd & Broadway, and Sutton 1 and 2.

SINCE OTAR LEFT
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

SUPER SIZE ME
Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and 72nd Street East.

TWENTYNINE PALMS (4/12/04)
Cinema Village.

VAN HELSING
Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema Classics, 332 E. 11th St. (212-677-6309).
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—World-cinema Fridays. May 14 at 7:30: "The Braveheart Will Take the Bride" (1995, Aditya Chopra; in Hindi). ♦ Through May 21: A Takeshi Kitano retrospective. All films are in Japanese. May 15 at 2: "Dolls" (2002). ♦ May 15 at 4:30: "Sonatine" (1993). ♦ May 15-16 at 6:30: "Fireworks" (1998). ♦ May 16 at 2: "Kids Return" (1996). ♦ May 16 at 4:30: "A Scene at the Sea" (1991).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—May 14-16: The Fourth Annual Bicycle Film Festival. ♦ Essential cinema. May 15 at 5: "The Parson's Widow" (1921, Carl Th. Dreyer; silent). ♦ May 16 at 5: "Michael" (1924, Dreyer; in Danish, no subtitles).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—May 12 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9:30: "Winter Kills" (†). ♦ May 13 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Nausicaä" (1984, Hayao Miyazaki; in Japanese). ♦ A Wong Kar-Wai retrospective. Most films are in Cantonese. May 14 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Happy Together" (1997). ♦ May 15 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Chungking Express" (1994). ♦ May 16 at 2 and 6:45: "Ashes of Time" (1994). ♦ May 16 at 4:30 and 9: "The Eagle Shooting Heroes" (1993, Jeffrey Lau). ♦ Jerzy Stuhr films. May 17 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "List of Lovers" (1995). ♦ May 18 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "A Week in the Life of a Man" (1999).

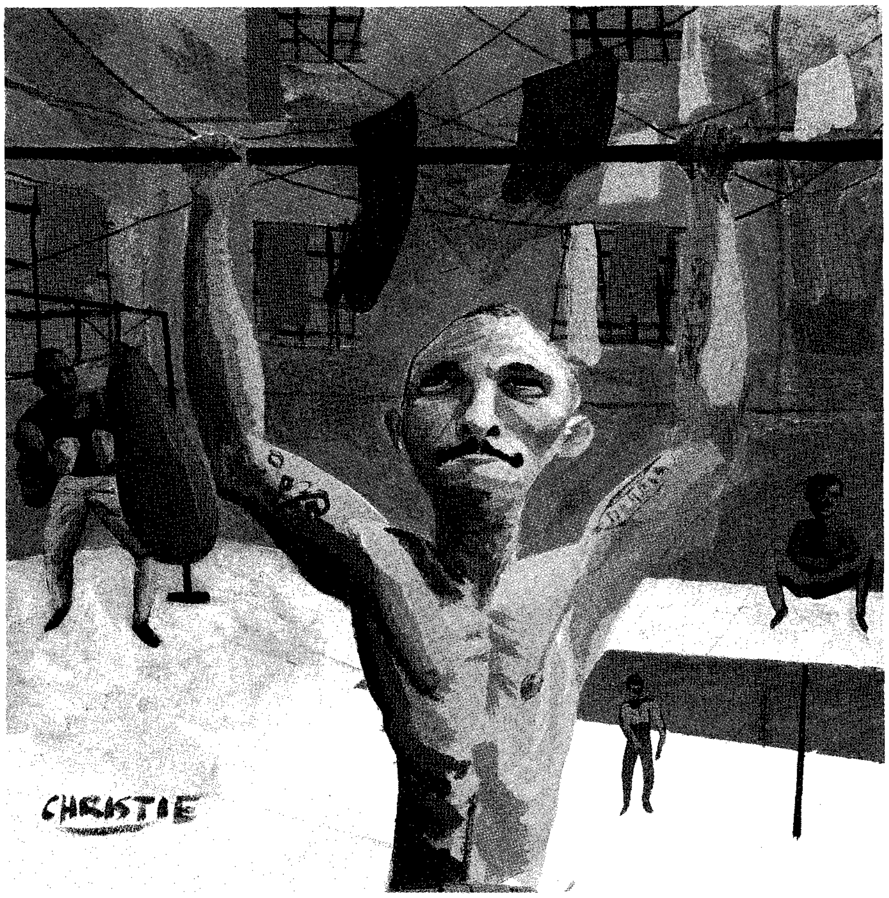
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—May 12-18 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:40: "Godzilla" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through June 22: "Nouveaux Cinéastes: New Filmmakers." May 18 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "17 Fois Cécile Cassard" (2001, Christophe Honoré; in French).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. May 14-15: "The Dark Crystal" (1982, Jim Henson).

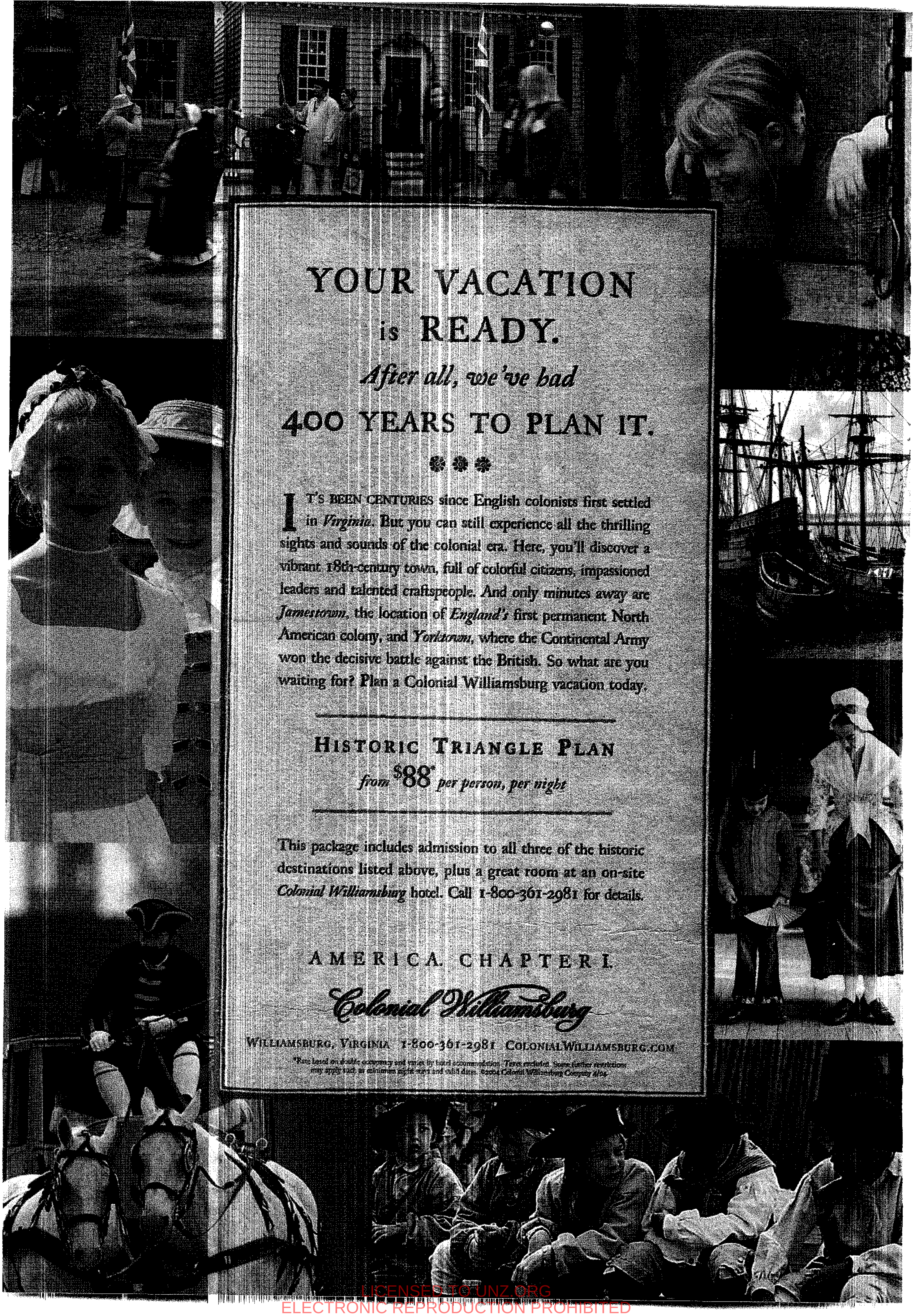
THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Music films and documentaries. May 15 at 1: "The Vagabond" (1951, Raj Kapoor). ♦ May 15 at 4:15: "A Tickle in the Heart" (1997, Stefan Schwietert). ♦ May 15 at 6: "Francisco Sánchez: Paco de Lucia" (2002, Daniel Hernandez Diez). ♦ May 15 at 8: "Saudade do Futuro" (2000, Marie-Clemence and Cesar Paes). ♦ May 15 at 9:45: "Doce Barbaros" (1974, Tom Job Azulay). ♦ A special presentation of "The Trilogy." May 16 at 3, 5:30, and 8: "Part Three: After the Life" (2002, Lucas Belvaux; in French).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through May 31: "Stranger on the Prowl: The Films of Joseph Losey." May 12 at 1:30 and 6:15: "The Romantic Englishwoman" (1975). ♦ May 12 at 4 and 8:30 and May 15 at 2: "King and Country" (1964). ♦ May 13 at 1 and May 16 at 6: "Galileo" (1974). ♦ May 14 at 1 and May 15 at 6:30: "Figures in a Landscape" (1970). ♦ May 14 at 3 and 7: "The Lawless" (1950). ♦ May 14 at 5 and 9, May 17 at 2, and May 18 at 9: "The Criminal a.k.a. The Concrete Jungle" (1960). ♦ May 15 at 2: "King and Country" (1964). ♦ May 15 at 4:15 and 8:30 and May 18 at 1: "Eva" (1962). ♦ May 16 at 1:45: "Finger of Guilt" (1956). ♦ May 16 at 3:30 and 8:45 and May 17 at 4: "The Go-Between" (1971).



Opening May 14, "Carandiru," a drama about a notorious Brazilian penitentiary.

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE



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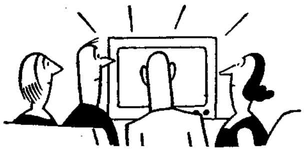
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
HEARTS AND MINDS



In the days of Saddam Hussein, hangings at Abu Ghraib prison took place on Wednesdays and Sundays—up to fifty or sixty a day, year after year, decade after decade. Prisoners were often shuttled to Abu Ghraib—a vast complex twenty miles west of Baghdad, with three miles of cinder-block walls and twenty-four watchtowers—in an ice-cream truck. Tens of thousands never came out. In the nineteen-eighties, according to a Washington *Post* report by Peter Finn, the executioner was a tall, burly man known as the Sword. He wore a pistol with Saddam's name inscribed on the handle, and his breath reeked of whiskey. The Sword's successor used to embrace the condemned prisoner from behind on the scaffold, so that when the trapdoor opened the two dropped together and the prisoner's neck snapped more efficiently. Torture was routine in Abu Ghraib: isolation, beatings, rapes, attack dogs, electric shocks, starvation. In the death house, the walls were covered with graffiti. Most marked the days left to the prisoners. "God save me," one man wrote, "and I will pray seventy thousand times." A report published in 1993 by Human Rights Watch quoted a former inmate as saying, "No one, not Pushkin, not Mahfouz, can describe what happened to us."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

From the beginning of the war in Iraq, the Administration's rhetoric placed moral progress at the heart of its mission. "I call on all governments to join with the United States and the community of law-abiding nations in prohibiting, investigating, and prosecuting all acts of torture," President Bush said last June, emphasizing the ethical underpinnings of Operation Iraqi Freedom. "We are leading this fight by example." The sentiment was laudable—and it is precisely what has made the revelations of American misconduct in Abu Ghraib so profoundly disheartening.

There are order-of-magnitude distinctions to be made. Major General Antonio M. Taguba's confidential report on the brutality, humiliation, and sadism at Abu Ghraib can hardly compare to descriptions of the horrors there under Saddam. What happened is not on the same scale as the massacre of Vietnamese civilians in My Lai, or, indeed, the routine torture of prisoners that continues to be countenanced around the world. It is nonetheless shocking, and indefensible, and has made a mockery of this Administration's pretenses to moral leadership in the Middle East.

Iraq is not like the Second World War, in which victory consisted of the triumph of one conventional army over another. F.D.R. and Churchill did not spend much time worrying about winning the hearts and minds of the Germans or the Japanese. (If they had, the firebombing of Dresden and Tokyo would likely not have been considered.) Victory in Iraq depends not only on the successful overthrow of Saddam but also on the maintenance of security there and on the attainment of some measure of legitimacy, in order to make good on the idealistic project of building a stable, secular democracy. From the start, moral and political acumen was just as essential as military efficiency.

This preëmptive invasion, in all its complexity, was carried out in a particular kind of information universe. In Iraq, as elsewhere in the Arab world, people have an understanding of the United States that is shaped (and skewed) by a combination of real information and history, on the one hand, and by resentments and conspiracy theories, on the

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other. The region's newspapers and satellite television stations will never see the world as the *Times* or CNN does. In Baghdad, the Coalition collects all the paranoid or malevolent rumors in circulation in order to rebut them. But Abu Ghraib was no rumor; it was an incident—indeed, part of a pattern of incidents—of indiscipline, cruelty, and moral failure. The photographs and reports have deepened every resentment, every sense of grievance and subjection. Our moral standing in the region was low enough before Abu Ghraib. The notion of Iraqis—to say nothing of the rest of the Arab world—accepting the United States as a moral exemplar is now surely out of reach.

Nor has the Administration shown much moral leadership in Washington. After months of secrecy, Pentagon officials have admitted that they have been conducting thirty criminal investigations into abuses in jails in Iraq and Afghanistan. But that acknowledgment was not forthright; it came only after CBS's "60 Minutes II" broadcast photographs of what occurred at Abu Ghraib, and this magazine's Seymour Hersh published excerpts of the Taguba report.

Initially, the Pentagon acted as if the report were insufficiently important to require its attention. General Richard Myers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, went on the Sunday political talk shows to say that he hadn't yet read it. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld allowed that the photographs and the acts they depicted were indeed horrifying, but he seemed more interested in parsing definitions of "violence." "My impression is that what has been charged thus far is abuse, which I believe technically is different from torture," Rumsfeld said at a press conference that might have been scripted by Lewis Carroll. "I don't know if it is correct to say what you just said that torture has taken place, or that there's been a conviction for torture. And therefore I'm not going to address the torture word." Thus does the Secretary torture words. Or maybe he's abusing them. Anyway, whether unleashing guard dogs on naked prisoners, for example, is torture or abuse is not the main question. The main question is how such things came to be done under American auspices.

As citizens of the world expressed their outrage, domestic soldiers of the right wing quickly sought to minimize, even trivialize, the affair. Rush Limbaugh, who broadcasts to twenty million radio listeners a week, outdid himself as he launched what might be described as "the Animal House defense."

"This is no different than what happens at the Skull and Bones initiation," he intoned. "And we're going to ruin people's lives over it and we're going to hamper our military effort, and then we are going to really hammer them because they had a good time. You know, these people are being fired at every day. I'm talking about people having a good time. These people, you ever heard of emotional release? You heard of the need to blow some steam off?"

And where is the President in all this? His first instinct, like Rumsfeld's, was to grasp at fine distinctions. The affair was "abhorrent," he told two Arab television stations, but he would not apologize, not plainly and directly. And, in what seemed a transparent attempt to get tough without consequences, Bush arranged for the whole world to be told via press leaks that he had called Rumsfeld to the Oval Office and "chided" him.

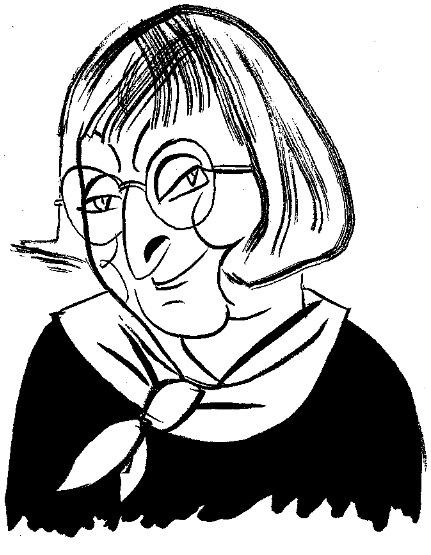
The Secretary's resignation has been sensibly demanded by the *Times* and *The Economist*, but not by the Commander-in-Chief. "We are leading this fight by example," Bush had said in June. His White House might regain some measure of credibility if he actually did choose to make an example of someone. But that is not his way. As the President made clear at his most recent press conference, he does not make mistakes—none that he can recall. His chief lieutenants are similarly flawless, except for the likes of Richard Clarke and Paul O'Neill, whose common flaw was to see the Administration as less than perfect, and to say so out loud.

Finally, at the end of the week, came Bush's sullen apology in the presence of the King of Jordan, and Rumsfeld's steely contrition for this "catastrophe." The President and the Secretary of Defense knew about Abu Ghraib for months. Their failure to come forward was also not a mistake. Mistakes, as ever, are the province of others.

—*David Remnick*

URBAN STUDIES
CITIES AND SONGS

Jane Jacobs, the matchless analyst of all things urban, returned to New York the other day and looked around her. In the forty-plus years since her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" appeared, her views, which then seemed wildly eccentric—basically, that New York's future depended less on tall buildings and big projects than on the preservation of small, old blocks and catch-as-catch-can retailing—have been vindicated so many times, and in so many ways, that by now one can hardly think about this city without thinking about her, and like her. Resident in Toronto since 1968 ("I needed to escape my civic duties here to write and think"), Jacobs, who is eighty-eight years old, was in town for the publication of her latest book, the intimidatingly titled "Dark Age Ahead." One afternoon last week, she spent a few minutes talking about old haunts, feuds, and hopes.



Jane Jacobs

"I love New York so much still," she said. "But the traffic is the worst I've ever known it to be." (In a chapter in her new book, she explains briskly why one-way streets, designed to streamline traffic, only complicate it.) "New York still has so much pizzazz, because people make it new every day. Like all cities, it's self-organizing. People looking for a date on Third Avenue make it into a place full of hope and expectation, and this has nothing to do with architecture. Those are the emotions that draw us to cities, and they depend on things being a bit messy. The most perfectly designed place can't compete. Everything is provided, which is the worst thing we can provide. There's a joke that the father of an old friend used to tell, about a preacher who warns children, 'In Hell there will be wailing and weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 'What if you don't have teeth?' one of the children asks. 'Then teeth will be provided,' he says sternly. That's it—the spirit of the designed city: Teeth Will Be Provided for You."

The preservation of some of New York's communities, so threatened in Jacobs's day, pleases her, but their gentrification worries her. "Whenever I'm here," she said, "I go back to look at our house, 555 Hudson Street, and I know that I could never afford it now." She wishes that the city had taken her advice about communities with mixed incomes: "You build low-cost housing in small lots and then see that it's kept affordable."

She also admits that she still thinks about her old antagonists from those years, such as the city planner James Felt and the master builder Robert Moses. "You have to understand, I have a very bad character," she said gaily. "I'm a very vindictive person, so I still think of them with a certain hatred. I don't think people should have such a free hand with other people's lives."

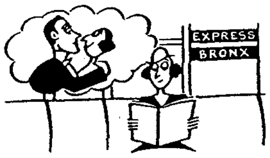
Jacobs has closely followed the Ground Zero plans and debates, and she thinks that the right thing to do is not to do anything right away. "The significance of that site now is that we don't know what its significance is," she said. "We'll know in fifteen or twenty years." She also thinks that it might be a good idea not to "restore" the street grid at the Ground Zero site but to break it decisively. "I was at a school in Connecticut where the architects watched paths that the children made in the snow all winter, and then when spring came they made those the gravel paths across the green. Why not do the same thing here?"

Her new book, despite its title, "is not gloomy," she said. "But it is a wake-up call." She believes that the fight for the soul of America is still on, and that it will be a battle, essentially, between cars and songs. "Our songs are so strong, don't you think?" she said. "I get awfully sick when I hear comparisons to the Roman Empire. They were so much grimmer than we are, the Romans, so lacking in emotions and sentiments. Our songs and cities are the best things about us. Songs and cities are so indispensable. Even if we go into darkness, the time will come when people will want to know how these ruins were made—the essence of the life we made. It sounds very conceited to say it, but I hope that what I wrote will help people start back. Oh, yes. My favorite song is 'Shenandoah.' "

—*Adam Gopnik*

INK

ISN'T IT ROMANTIC?

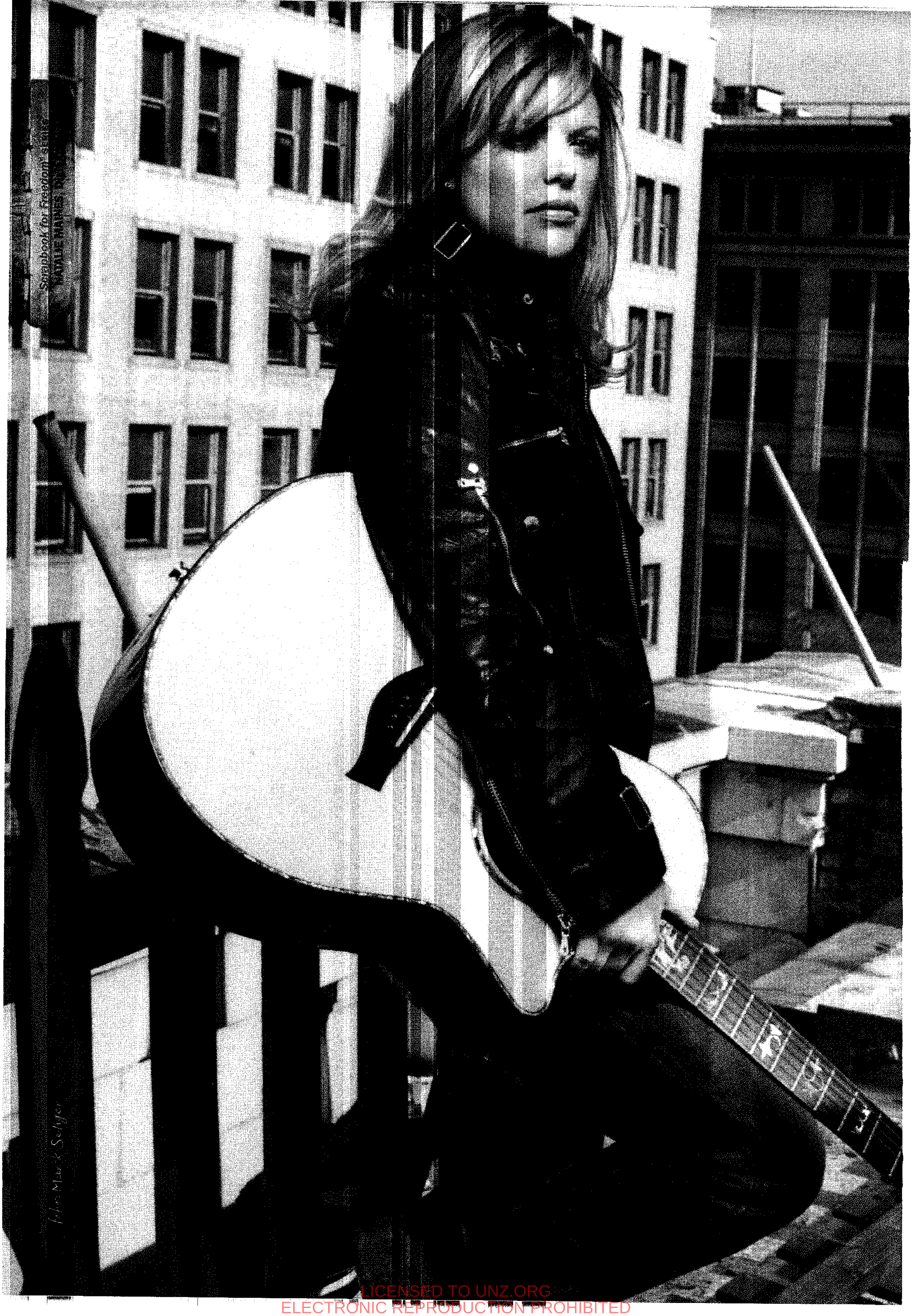


Among romance novelists, as among porn stars and career criminals, the use of a pseudonym is a time-honored practice: the best-selling author Carly Phillips is also the slightly worse-selling author Karen Drogin, while Jayne Ann Krentz and Amanda Quick will never be seen in a room at the same time. Last week, a party was held at Le Cirque to toast the publication of "Man Trouble," a new romance by Melanie Craft which draws on the convention of the nom de plume for comic effect. The heroine of Craft's book is Molly Shaw, a mousy, twin-set-wearing professor of women's history who secretly writes steamy piratical novels as Sandra St. Claire, and who is persuaded to adopt the va-va-voom guise of her literary alter ego in order to seduce Jake Berenger, a billionaire hotelier.

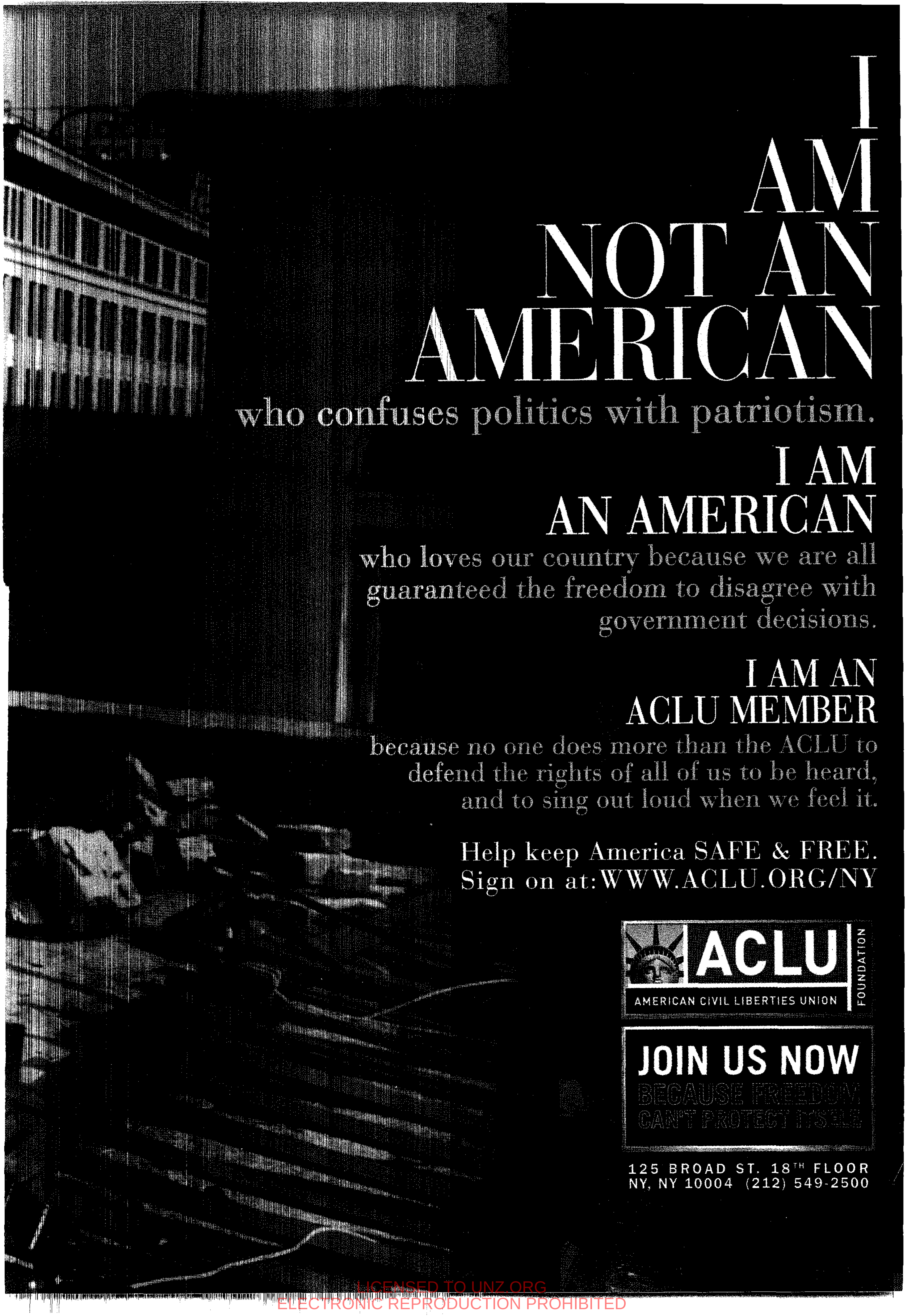
Craft does not write under a pseudonym, though she does have an alter ego: Mrs. Larry Ellison, the fourth wife of the billionaire C.E.O. of Oracle. Craft, whose résumé includes an undergraduate degree from Oberlin and stints as a bartender, a pastry chef, and a safari driver, married Ellison five months ago in a simple back-yard ceremony—if any ceremony can be said to be simple when it takes place in a back yard that consists of forty-five acres, is performed by a congressman, and is photographed by Steve Jobs. Craft has honey-colored hair and the kind of radiant beauty that is testament to genes and grooming working together in perfect concert. She is thirty-four years old. "Man Trouble," she said, was inspired by an article in the *Post* several years ago suggesting that "Melanie Craft," the romance novelist whom Ellison was alleged to be dating, but was never actually seen with, was, in fact, a creation of the Oracle P.R. department. "The character of Jake is not based on my husband, though if it were it would be good for book sales," Craft said, demonstrating both a graceful tolerance for the obvious question and the commercial author's concern for the bottom line, in spite of the fact that her lines have recently become bottomless.

Marriage has not diminished Craft's ambitions—"Fifty-four per cent of paperback sales are romance novels," she said, explaining why it's better to be a pulp author than a literary one—even though advances are not what keep her in ink cartridges these days. "I can buy all the new books and laptops I want," she said when she was asked whether it was fun to be really, really, really rich. "And it gives me a chance to meet really interesting people. We have a medical foundation, and I get to meet Nobel laureates." (Craft, like her heroine in "Man Trouble," has undergone training in how to talk to the media.) But, she said, significant things remained unchanged. "It's ironic. The thing I want most, to write good books, is the thing you can't buy." Life with Ellison—summers spent on his boat in Italy, where in August they will celebrate his sixtieth birthday—does provide her with material that other romance novelists might read about only in romance novels, but, she said, "I try to keep my sense of humor about it. So much of it is absurd."

The party itself was of the sort that might delight any novelist, romantic or otherwise. Although Craft had adopted a Molly Shaw-meets-Madison Avenue look—black Armani pants, a white Chanel blouse, and a cream-colored TSE cardigan fastened with a jewelled pin that belonged to her grandmother—the environs of Le Cirque seemed stuffier than her natural habitat, and the guests, a found selection of Upper East Siders of advancing years, including Ahmet Ertegun and Arnold Scaasi, seemed unlikely Craft pals. There were those who—like two employees of Valentino, where Craft is a client—


Scrapbook for Freedom
NATALIE MAINES DIX

[illegible] Mark Seliger



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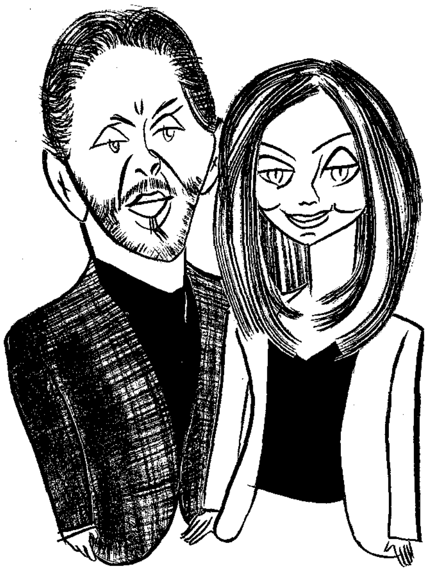
might have known that Craft’s husband had resources, and those who, like Scaasi, were clueless. Scaasi, his hair as golden as Craft’s, rolled in late with Parker Ladd, his longtime companion. When Craft referred to herself as a newlywed, Scaasi asked, “Where’s your husband?”



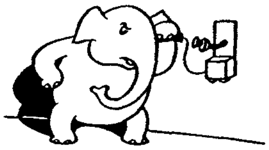
Larry Ellison and Melanie Craft

“He’s at home looking after the business,” Craft said. “What business?” Scaasi inquired. “The software business,” Craft replied. “Software?” said Scaasi, an eyebrow raised. “Software and tofu—that’s all we have in California,” Craft said dryly. Then Scaasi, whose own book, “Women I Have Dressed (and Undressed!),” is coming out in the fall, took down Craft’s address so that he could send her an invitation to his book party, and asked who her neighbors were in California. The answer was, apparently, suitably impressive. “She lives next door to David Geffen!” he said, raising his Martini glass as if nothing in the world could be grander.

—*Rebecca Mead*

UP TO HERE DEPT.

A KERRY REPUBLICAN



Someday, no doubt, students of class politics will reach a consensus on precisely when it was that George W. Bush’s chucking of his family’s patrician—and moderate—ethos reached the point of irretrievability. (Was it when he said he didn’t read the newspaper? Or had his father put in the fix way back in 1988, with the pork rinds?) Future historians who find themselves examining the resulting countertrend, whereby the Rockefeller Republicans who were betrayed by Bush came around to betraying him back, might end up taking a look at Grant Winthrop.

For the most part, Winthrop has been a Party loyalist: his political vita includes a run in the 1976 California primary as a Gerald Ford delegate and a contribution to Rick Lazio’s Senate campaign against Hillary Clinton. And although John Kerry is a first cousin—their mothers, the Forbes girls, were sisters—Winthrop helped raise money for his friend William Weld’s bid to unseat Kerry in the 1996 Massachusetts Senate race.

Last year, however, at a memorial service for Kerry’s mother, Winthrop took his cousin aside and lamented the Republican Party’s rightward turn. “I told John I was thinking of switching parties, and John said, ‘Don’t do it,’ ” Winthrop recalled the other day in his office at Milbank Winthrop, an investment-advisory firm. “John told me, ‘It’s better for me if you can raise money from Republicans.’ ” And so it is that Winthrop has come to serve on the finance committee of Kerry’s campaign in New York.

“Republicans for Kerry,” Winthrop said, chuckling. “There isn’t any official organization, though I did look into having some bumper stickers printed. It’s a growing movement.” This spring, for instance, he was in Jackson Hole, where he heard about some local Republicans who, he says, “absolutely can’t stand George Bush. I ended up coming home with a couple of checks.” So far, Winthrop and his wife have raised more than two hundred thousand dollars, and, he says, more than twenty of the people he’s collected checks from are registered Republicans. Winthrop’s two tables at a two-thousand-dollar-a-plate Kerry fund-raiser at the Sheraton New York last month were within spitting distance of the dais. Among his guests was Theodore Roosevelt IV, one of Bush’s more vocal Republican critics.

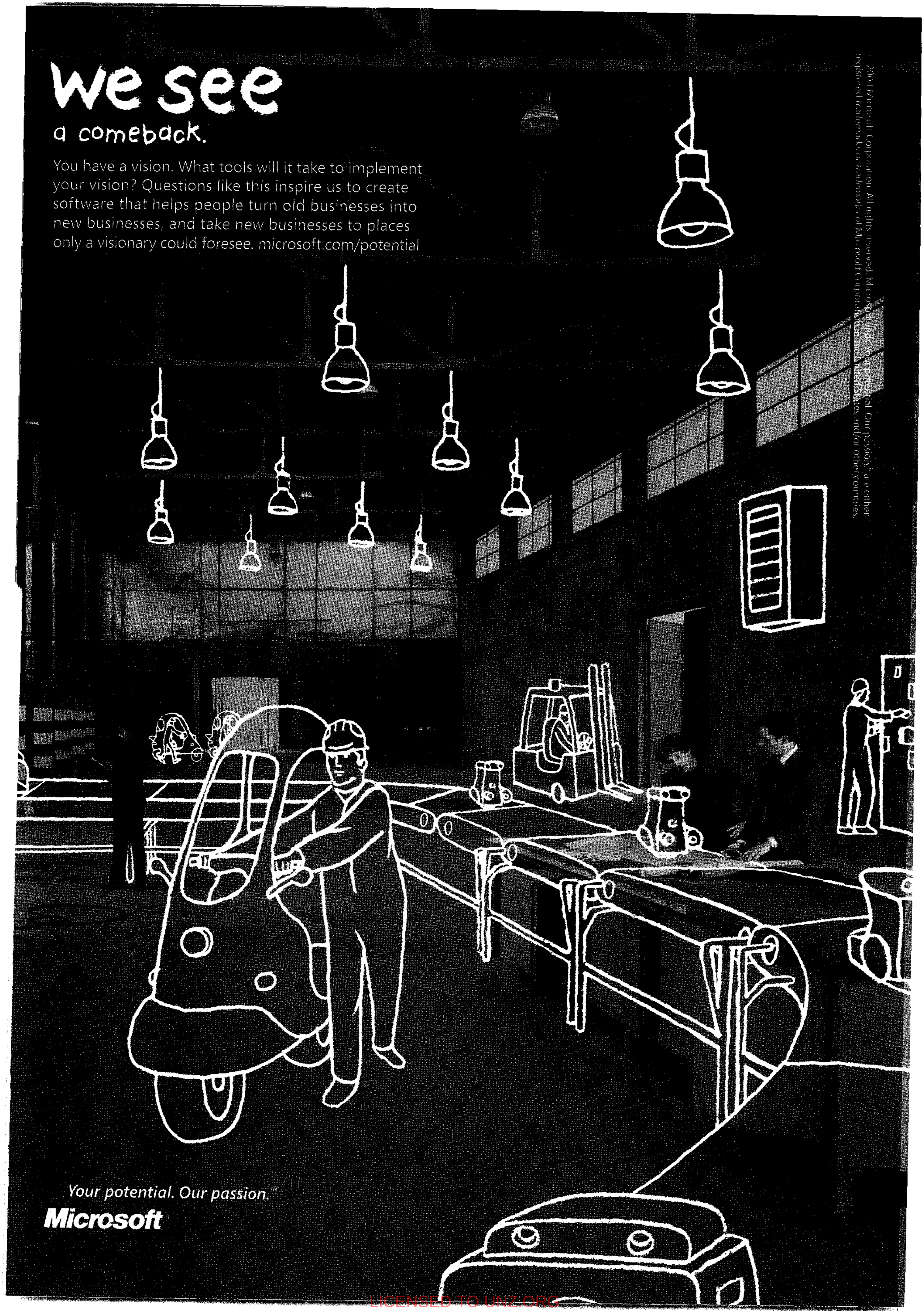
Winthrop is a ruddy and sportsmanlike fifty-five years old. He lives on Fifth Avenue but grew up at Groton House Farm, the family’s estate on the North Shore of Massachusetts, which served as Kerry’s American home when, as a foreign-service brat, he was sent back to New England for boarding school. At his desk the other day, Winthrop pawed his way through a file and produced a handwritten list of potential Republican turncoats. He pulled out an e-mail exchange he’d had with one of them, a businessman in New Jersey, who, according to Federal Election Commission records, has made some six hundred and fifty thousand dollars in political donations—the bulk of them to Republicans—since 1997. “This e-mail came after I’d seen him at a dinner, when we’d all had some wine and so on,” Winthrop said. “But he made it clear that he was very unhappy with Bush. So I asked him, ‘Would you support Kerry?’ ”

In his reply, Winthrop’s target wrote, “I was one of Bush’s top five supporters financially approaching seven figures—not only could he care less, he has embarked on this partisan Christian Right Crusade. . . . I agree with the Iraqi adventure but find it incredibly poorly planned, and hold him and a senile Cheney responsible. Having said that, I am inclined to hold my nose and vote for him and am particularly leery of Kerry and Edwards, as I see no evidence of moderation. If you can convince me to the contrary, I would be open to reconsidering.”

The other day, Winthrop decided to follow up. “So here I’ve written, ‘Dear Blank,’ and I gave the two candidates grades,” Winthrop said, quoting from his newest e-mail. “ ‘Social issues: Kerry A, Bush F; Economic: Kerry B+, Bush B-; Foreign policy: Kerry A-, Bush C-.’ Then I wrote, ‘I feel, as a moderate Republican, that I have nowhere to turn except to the Democrats.’ ”

A response arrived just a few minutes later. Winthrop read it aloud: “The gentleman says, ‘If Kerry would really move to the middle, quit the economic nonsense he is spouting, and come down with a realistic defense and foreign policy, I could support him.’ ”

Winthrop scratched his forehead, gave the reply another look, and pronounced it something short of an out-and-out rejection. “I wouldn’t go back to this chap for some time,” he said. “But will I try him again before this campaign



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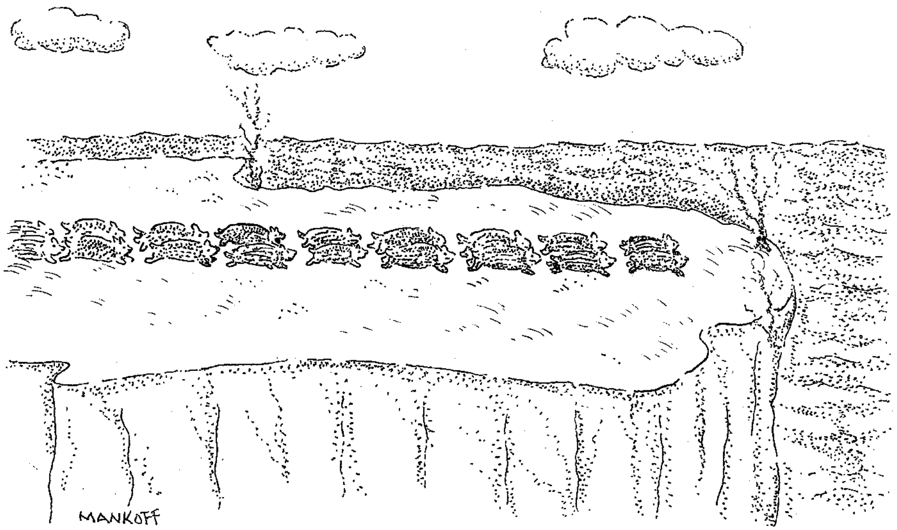


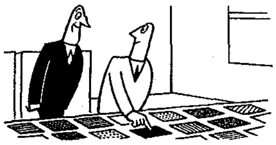
"Look, I have my misgivings, too, but what choice do we have except to stay the course?"

• •

is finished? Oh, hell, yeah, absolutely. If this is part of the process he needs to go through, well, I think one just has to let time go by."

—*Eric Konigsberg*

THREADS
FAMILY BUSINESS



The entire Ermenegildo Zegna clan flew in from Italy's Piedmont region the other evening to celebrate the opening of their new clothing store on Fifth Avenue. Three generations of Zegnas—including the eighty-year-old president, Angelo; his forty-nine-year-old son, Ermenegildo, who is the co-C.E.O.; his daughters Anna, forty-five, and Benedetta, thirty-seven; plus four teen-age grandchildren—were on hand, all dressed to the teeth.

Edoardo Zegna, eighteen, who has shoulder-length dark hair and who was wearing a nifty dark-blue cashmere blazer (40 long), watched the goings-on from a perch on a staircase, in front of a large sepia-toned photograph of the Zegna mill in Trivero (population 7,000). The actor Adrien Brody, with a Bellini, and the former Senator Bill Bradley, with a 7UP, came over to say hello. Edoardo smiled and pointed at the photograph of the plant.

"I go here many times to learn the stages," he said earnestly, in Swiss-schooled English. "*Filatura*—how do you say it?—the spinning; *orditura*, the warping; *tessitura*, the weaving; *tintoria*, the dyeing; *finissaggio*, the finishing. All our stages."

He was jostled politely on the stairway by some massive football players, who were also elegantly suited up: Tom Brady (Patriots), Peyton Manning (Colts), Dan Marino (Dolphins), and Tiki Barber (Giants). Edoardo took a deep breath and continued. "Our water in Trivero is important; it makes the softness when we wash the wool," he said. "We have the best water, from the Sesia River, in our mountains."

Edoardo's kid brother, Angelo (38 regular), squeezed in beside him. "Edoardo, tomorrow we go to the Knicks," he said.

"We talk now about the *lanificio*," Edoardo said, nudging Angelo with an elbow to focus attention on the picture of the plant. Benedetta Zegna, the company's director of events and personnel training, came over to join the boys. She was dressed in all-white cashmere. "We're a vertical company," she said. "We own everything ourselves; we go to China or Kashmir for the raw material, and we control everything, until it is ready for made-to-measure in the stores. No one is bigger than the brand."

One of the happiest guests was Seth Abraham, the former president of Madison Square Garden. "Now that I'm retired, I can spend my time shopping," he said. "One of my goals is to visit every one of the three-hundred-odd Zegna shops in the world. In thirty years of marriage, the only argument I ever had with my wife was about my shopping. At home, she has only three closets, but I have nine."

There was a commotion at the entrance. "It's Nonno!" Edoardo said, and commanded his brother and his two younger cousins to come and greet their grandfather, Angelo Zegna, an imposing, portly (46 regular) gentleman with thin gray slicked-back hair. He wore an impeccably pressed cashmere suit of deep blue with flecks of gray. His grandchildren gathered around him on a leather sofa. With guarded fierceness, he gave them a careful once-over and offered some immediate pointers.

"You are always being tied together," he said evenly. "Love for your family is a fantastic weapon for any business. You sacrifice, you endure, but you must be tough with yourself. I grew up with this sentiment."

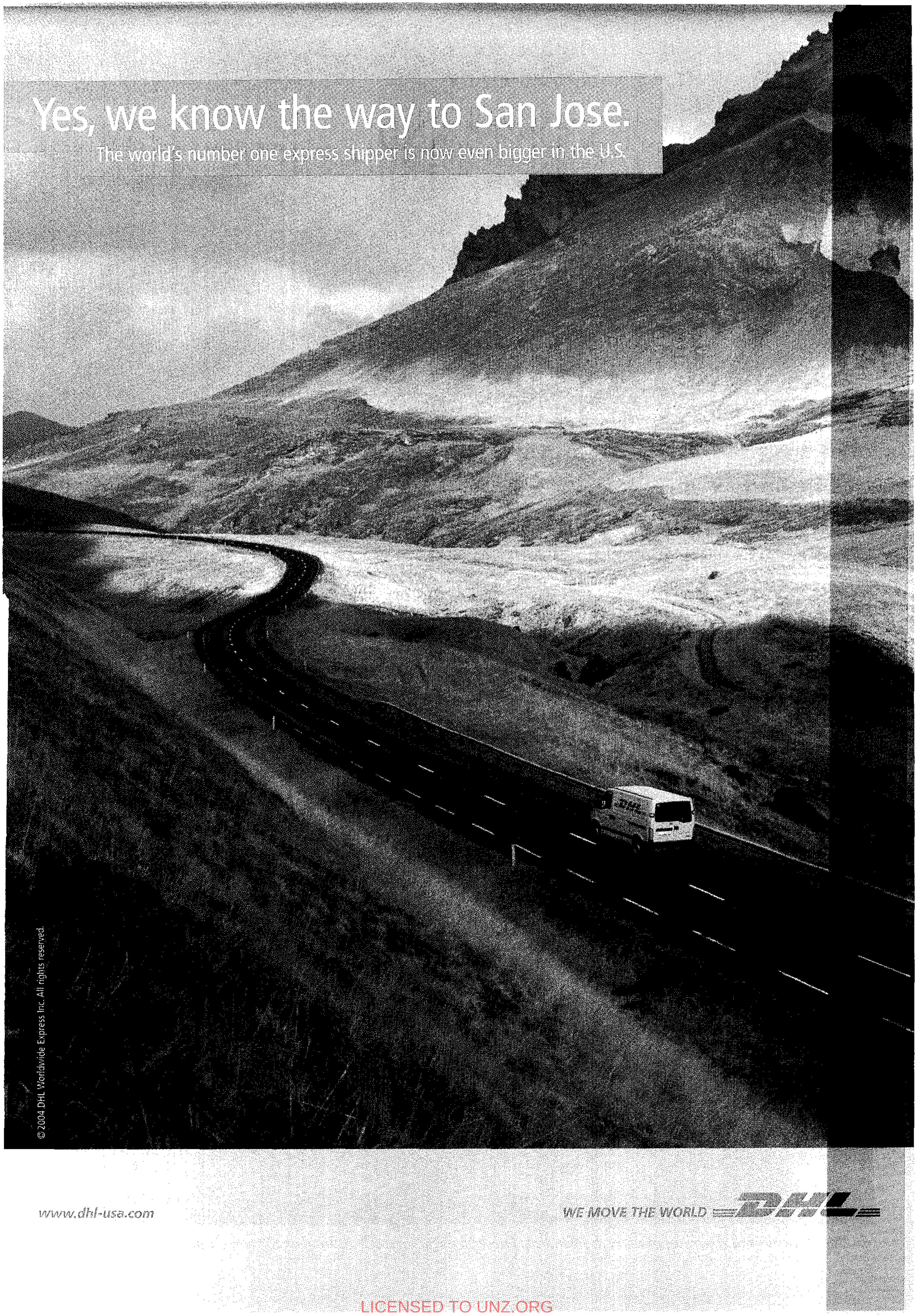
The grandchildren watched him respectfully. Some of the guests moved close, listening, too.

"My father was a great ambassador," Angelo said. "Our models were the English people, the way they made their suits. We wanted to make our own suits. He went to South America and found Italian tailors who would buy our fabrics. He sent me to Germany, and to France and all over the world, to learn the languages and find the tailors. My father was always so neat. When he read the newspaper, he would refold it to look the way it was before. I learned from him how to sit at the table. Do you remember the way I showed you to put the books under your arms, so you would sit straight at the table?"

The children laughed, and said they remembered.

"When I was a boy, Mussolini made us to have discipline, to do exercise, to make our bodies strong," he continued. "But our models for the suits were the English. Mussolini wore the heavy, thick suits, not like the English. We did not like the fabric of Mussolini." He rubbed his thumb against his forefinger. "His suits were—how you say it? Coarse."

—*Lillian Ross*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ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

CHAIN OF COMMAND

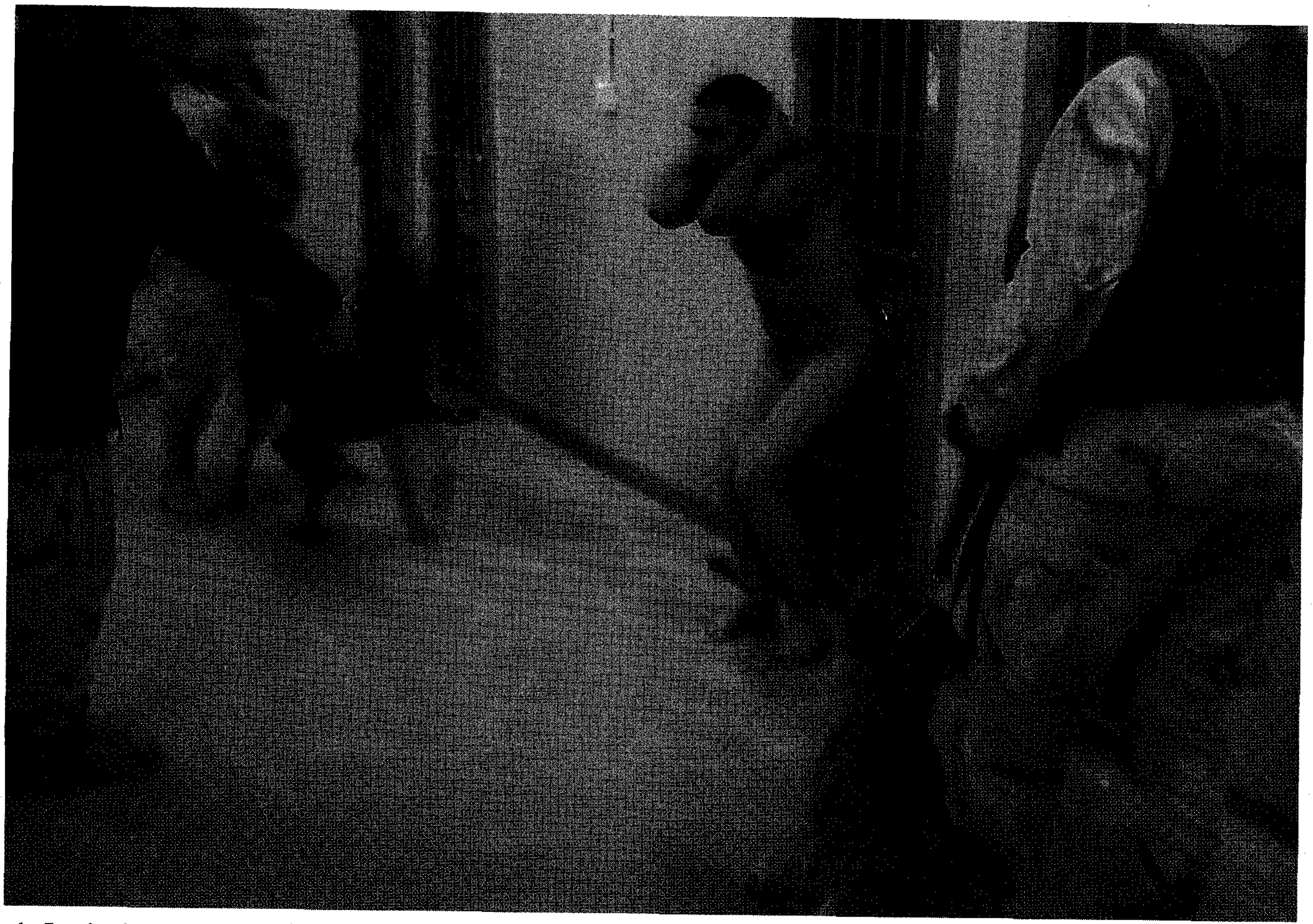
How the Department of Defense mishandled the disaster at Abu Ghraib.

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

In his devastating report on conditions at Abu Ghraib prison, in Iraq, Major General Antonio M. Taguba singled out only three military men for praise. One of them, Master-at-Arms William J. Kimbro, a Navy dog handler, should be commended, Taguba wrote, because he "knew his duties and refused to participate in improper interrogations despite significant pressure from the MI"—military intelligence—"personnel at Abu Ghraib." Elsewhere in the report it became clear what Kimbro would not do: American soldiers, Taguba said, used "military working dogs to frighten and intimidate detainees with threats of attack, and in one instance actually biting a detainee."

Taguba's report was triggered by a soldier's decision to give Army investigators photographs of the sexual humiliation and abuse of prisoners. These images were first broadcast on "60 Minutes II" on April 28th. Seven enlisted members of the 372nd Military Police Company of the 320th Military Police Battalion, an Army reserve unit, are now facing prosecution, and six officers have been reprimanded. Last week, I was given another set of digital photographs, which had been in the possession of a member of the 320th. According to a time sequence embedded in the digital files, the photographs were taken by two different cameras over a twelve-minute period on the evening of December 12, 2003, two months after the military-police unit was assigned to Abu Ghraib.

One of the new photographs shows a young soldier, wearing a dark jacket over his uniform and smiling into the camera, in the corridor of the jail. In the background are two Army dog handlers, in full camouflage combat gear, restraining two German shepherds. The dogs are barking at a man who is partly obscured from the camera's view by the smiling soldier. Another image shows that the man, an Iraqi prisoner, is naked. His hands are clasped behind his neck and he is leaning against the door to a cell, contorted with terror, as the dogs bark a few feet away. Other photographs show the dogs straining at their leashes and snarling at the prisoner. In another, taken a few minutes later, the Iraqi is lying on the ground, writhing in pain, with a soldier sitting on top of him, knee pressed to his back. Blood is streaming from the inmate's leg. Another photograph is a closeup of the naked prisoner, from his waist to his ankles, lying on the floor. On his right thigh is what appears



An Iraqi prisoner and American military dog handlers. Other photographs show the Iraqi on the ground, bleeding.

to be a bite or a deep scratch. There is another, larger wound on his left leg, covered in blood.

There is at least one other report of violence involving American soldiers, an Army dog, and Iraqi citizens, but it was not in Abu Ghraib. Cliff Kindy, a member of the Christian Peacemaker Teams, a church-supported group that has been monitoring the situation in Iraq, told me that last November G.I.s unleashed a military dog on a group of civilians during a sweep in Ramadi, about thirty miles west of Fallujah. At first, Kindy told me, "the soldiers went house to house, and arrested thirty people." (One of them was Saad al-Khashab, an attorney with the Organization for Human Rights in Iraq, who told Kindy about the incident.) While the thirty detainees were being handcuffed and laid on the ground, a firefight broke out nearby; when it ended, the Iraqis were shoved into a house. Khashab told Kindy that the American soldiers then "turned the dog loose inside the house, and several people were bitten." (The Defense Department said that it was unable to comment about the incident before *The New Yorker* went to press.)

When I asked retired Major General Charles Hines, who was commandant of the Army's military-police school during a twenty-eight-year career in military law enforcement, about these reports, he reacted with dismay. "Turning a dog loose in a room of people? Loosing dogs on prisoners of war? I've never heard of it, and it would never have been tolerated," Hines said. He added that trained police dogs have long been a presence in Army prisons, where they are used for sniffing out narcotics and other contraband among the prisoners, and, occasionally, for riot control. But, he said, "I would never have authorized it for interrogating or coercing prisoners. If I had, I'd have been put in jail or kicked out of the Army."

The International Red Cross and human-rights groups have repeatedly complained during the past year about the American military's treatment of Iraqi prisoners, with little success. In one case, disclosed last month by the Denver *Post*, three Army soldiers from a military-intelligence battalion were accused of assaulting a female Iraqi inmate at Abu Ghraib. After an administrative review, the three were fined "at least five hundred dollars and demoted in rank," the newspaper said.

Army commanders had a different response when, on January 13th, a military policeman presented Army investigators with a computer disk containing graphic photographs. The images were being swapped from computer to computer throughout the 320th Battalion. The Army's senior commanders immediately understood they had a problem—a looming political and public-relations disaster that would taint America and damage the war effort.

One of the first soldiers to be questioned was Ivan Frederick, the M.P. sergeant who was in charge of a night shift at Abu Ghraib. Frederick, who has been ordered to face a court-martial in Iraq for his role in the abuse, kept a running diary that began with a knock on his door by agents of the Army's Criminal Investigations Division (C.I.D.) at two-thirty in the morning on January 14th. "I was escorted . . . to the front door of our building, out of sight from my room," Frederick wrote, "while . . . two unidentified males stayed in my room. 'Are they searching my room?' " He was told yes. Frederick later formally agreed to permit the agents to search for cameras, computers, and storage devices.

On January 16th, three days after the Army received the pictures, Central Command issued a blandly worded, five-sentence press release about an investigation into the mistreatment of prisoners. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said last week that it was then that he learned of the allegations. At some point soon afterward, Rumsfeld informed President Bush. On January 19th, Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez, the officer in charge of American forces in Iraq, ordered a secret investigation into Abu Ghraib. Two weeks later, General Taguba was ordered to conduct his inquiry. He submitted his report on February 26th. By then, according to testimony before the Senate last week by General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, people "inside our building" had discussed the photographs. Myers, by his own account, had still not read the Taguba report or seen the photo-

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graphs, yet he knew enough about the abuses to persuade "60 Minutes II" to delay its story.

At a Pentagon news conference last week, Rumsfeld and Marine General Peter Pace, the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, insisted that the investigation into Abu Ghraib had moved routinely through the chain of command. If the Army had been slow, it was because of built-in safeguards. Pace told the journalists, "It's important to know that as investigations are completed they come up the chain of command in a very systematic way. So that the individual who reports in writing [sends it] up to the next level commander. But he or she takes time, a week or two weeks, three weeks, whatever it takes, to read all of the documentation, get legal advice [and] make the decisions that are appropriate at his or her level. . . . That way everyone's rights are protected and we have the opportunity systematically to take a look at the entire process."

In interviews, however, retired and active-duty officers and Pentagon officials said that the system had not worked. Knowledge of the nature of the abuses—and especially the politically toxic photographs—had been severely, and unusually, restricted. "Everybody I've talked to said, 'We just didn't know'—not even in the J.C.S.," one well-informed former intelligence official told me, emphasizing that he was referring to senior officials with whom such allegations would normally be shared. "I haven't talked to anybody on the inside who knew—nowhere. It's got them scratching their heads." A senior Pentagon official said that many of the senior generals in the Army were similarly out of the loop on the Abu Ghraib allegations.

Within the Pentagon, there was a spate of fingerpointing last week. One top general complained to a colleague that the commanders in Iraq should have taken C4, a powerful explosive, and blown up Abu Ghraib last spring, with all of its "emotional baggage"—the prison was known for its brutality under Saddam Hussein—instead of turning it into an American facility. "This is beyond the pale in terms of lack of command attention," a retired major general told me, speaking of the abuses at Abu Ghraib. "Where were the flag officers? And I'm not just talking about a one-star," he added, referring to Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, the commander at Abu Ghraib who was relieved of duty. "This was a huge leadership failure."

The Pentagon official told me that many senior generals believe that, along with the civilians in Rumsfeld's office, General Sanchez and General John Abizaid, who is in charge of the Central Command, in Tampa, Florida, had done their best to keep the issue quiet in the first months of the year. The official chain of command flows from General Sanchez, in Iraq, to Abizaid, and on to Rumsfeld and President Bush. "You've got to match action, or nonaction, with interests," the Pentagon official said. "What is the motive for not being forthcoming? They foresaw major diplomatic problems."

Secrecy and wishful thinking, the Pentagon official said, are defining characteristics of Rumsfeld's Pentagon, and shaped its response to the reports from Abu Ghraib. "They always want to delay the release of bad news—in the hope that something good will break," he said. The habit of procrastination in the face of bad news led to disconnects between Rumsfeld and the Army staff officers who were assigned to planning for troop requirements in Iraq. A year ago, the Pentagon official told me, when it became clear that the Army would have to call up more reserve units to deal with the insurgency, "we had call-up orders that languished for thirty or forty days in the office of the Secretary of Defense." Rumsfeld's staff always seemed to be waiting for something to turn up—for the problem to take care of itself, without any additional troops. The official explained, "They were hoping that they wouldn't have to make a decision." The delay meant that soldiers in some units about to be deployed had only a few days to prepare wills and deal with other family and financial issues.

The same deliberate indifference to bad news was evident in the past year, the Pentagon official said, when the Army conducted a series of elaborate war games. Planners would present best-case, moderate-case, and worst-case scenarios, in an effort to assess where the Iraq war was headed and to estimate future troop needs. In every case, the number of troops actually required exceeded the worst-case analysis. Nevertheless, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and civilian officials in the Pentagon continued to insist that future planning be based on the most optimistic scenario. “The optimistic estimate was that at this point in time”—mid-2004—“the U.S. Army would need only a handful of combat brigades in Iraq,” the Pentagon official said. “There are nearly twenty now, with the international coalition drying up. They were wildly off the mark.” The official added, “From the beginning, the Army community was saying that the projections and estimates were unrealistic.” Now, he said, “we’re struggling to maintain a hundred and thirty-five thousand troops while allowing soldiers enough time back home.”

In his news conference last Tuesday, Rumsfeld, when asked whether he thought the photographs and stories from Abu Ghraib were a setback for American policy in Iraq, still seemed to be in denial. “Oh, I’m not one for instant history,” he responded. By Friday, however, with some members of Congress and with editorials calling for his resignation, Rumsfeld testified at length before House and Senate committees and apologized for what he said was “fundamentally un-American” wrongdoing at Abu Ghraib. He also warned that more, and even uglier, disclosures were to come. Rumsfeld said that he had not actually looked at any of the Abu Ghraib photographs until some of them appeared in press accounts, and hadn’t reviewed the Army’s copies until the day before. When he did, they were “hard to believe,” he said. “There are other photos that depict . . . acts that can only be described as blatantly sadistic, cruel, and inhuman.” Later, he said, “It’s going to get still more terrible, I’m afraid.” Rumsfeld added, “I failed to recognize how important it was.”

NBC News later quoted U.S. military officials as saying that the unreleased photographs showed American soldiers “severely beating an Iraqi prisoner nearly to death, having sex with a female Iraqi prisoner, and ‘acting inappropriately with a dead body.’ The officials said there also was a videotape, apparently shot by U.S. personnel, showing Iraqi guards raping young boys.”

No amount of apologetic testimony or political spin last week could mask the fact that, since the attacks of September 11th, President Bush and his top aides have seen themselves as engaged in a war against terrorism in which the old rules did not apply. In the privacy of his office, Rumsfeld chafed over what he saw as the reluctance of senior Pentagon generals and admirals to act aggressively. By mid-2002, he and his senior aides were exchanging secret memorandums on modifying the culture of the military leaders and finding ways to encourage them “to take greater risks.” One memo spoke derisively of the generals in the Pentagon, and said, “Our prerequisite of perfection for ‘actionable intelligence’ has paralyzed us. We must accept that we may have to take action before every question can be answered.” The Defense Secretary was told that he should “break the ‘belt-and-suspenders’ mindset within today’s military . . . we ‘over-plan’ for every contingency. . . . We must be willing to accept the risks.” With operations involving the death of foreign enemies, the memo went on, the planning should not be carried out in the Pentagon: “The result will be decision by committee.”

The Pentagon’s impatience with military protocol extended to questions about the treatment of prisoners caught in the course of its military operations. Soon after 9/11, as the war on terror got under way, Donald Rumsfeld repeatedly made public his disdain for the Geneva conventions. Complaints about America’s treatment of prisoners, Rumsfeld said in early 2002, amounted to “isolated pockets of international hyperventilation.”

The effort to determine what happened at Abu Ghraib has evolved into a sprawling set of related investigations, some of them hastily put together, including inquiries into twenty-five suspicious deaths. Investigators have become increasingly concerned with the role played not only by military and intelligence officials but also by C.I.A. agents and private-contract employees. In a statement, the C.I.A. acknowledged that its Inspector General had an investigation under way into abuses at Abu Ghraib, which extended to the death of a prisoner. A source familiar with one of

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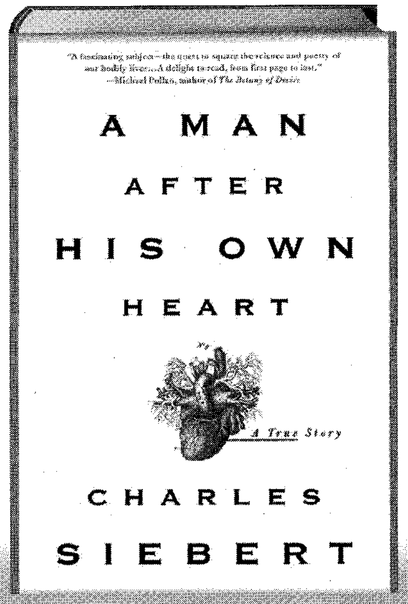

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the investigations told me that the victim was the man whose photograph, which shows his battered body packed in ice, has circulated around the world. A Justice Department prosecutor has been assigned to the case. The source also told me that an Army intelligence operative and a judge advocate general were seeking, through their lawyers, to negotiate immunity from prosecution in return for testimony.

The relationship between military policing and intelligence forces inside the Army prison system reached a turning point last fall in response to the insurgency against the Coalition Provisional Authority. "This is a fight for intelligence," Brigadier General Martin Dempsey, commander of the 1st Armored Division, told a reporter at a Baghdad press briefing in November. "Do I have enough soldiers? The answer is absolutely yes. The larger issue is, how do I use them and on what basis? And the answer to that is intelligence . . . to try to figure out how to take all this human intelligence as it comes in to us [and] turn it into something that's actionable." The Army prison system would now be asked to play its part.

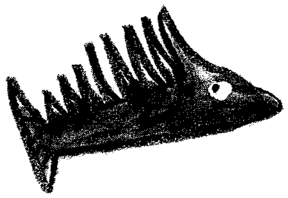
Two months earlier, Major General Geoffrey Miller, the commander of the task force in charge of the prison at Guantánamo, had brought a team of experts to Iraq to review the Army program. His recommendation was radical: that Army prisons be geared, first and foremost, to interrogations and the gathering of information needed for the war effort. "Detention operations must act as an enabler for interrogation . . . to provide a safe, secure and humane environment that supports the expeditious collection of intelligence," Miller wrote. The military police on guard duty at the prisons should make support of military intelligence a priority.

General Sanchez agreed, and on November 19th his headquarters issued an order formally giving the 205th Military Intelligence Brigade tactical control over the prison. General Taguba fearlessly took issue with the Sanchez orders, which, he wrote in his report, "effectively made an MI Officer, rather than an MP officer, responsible for the MP units conducting detainee operations at that facility. This is not doctrinally sound due to the different missions and agenda assigned to each of these respective specialties."

Taguba also criticized Miller's report, noting that "the intelligence value of detainees held at . . . Guantánamo is different than that of the detainees/internees held at Abu Ghraib and other detention facilities in Iraq. . . . There are a large number of Iraqi criminals held at Abu Ghraib. These are not believed to be international terrorists or members of Al Qaeda." Taguba noted that Miller's recommendations "appear to be in conflict" with other studies and with Army regulations that call for military-police units to have control of the prison system. By placing military-intelligence operatives in control instead, Miller's recommendations and Sanchez's change in policy undoubtedly played a role in the abuses at Abu Ghraib. General Taguba concluded that certain military-intelligence officers and civilian contractors at Abu Ghraib were "either directly or indirectly responsible" for the abuses, and urged that they be subjected to disciplinary action.

In late March, before the Abu Ghraib scandal became publicly known, Geoffrey Miller was transferred from Guantánamo and named head of prison operations in Iraq. "We have changed this—trust us," Miller told reporters in early May. "There were errors made. We have corrected those. We will make sure that they do not happen again."

Military-intelligence personnel assigned to Abu Ghraib repeatedly wore "sterile," or unmarked, uniforms or civilian clothes while on duty. "You couldn't tell them apart," the source familiar with the investigation said. The blurring of identities and organizations meant that it was impossible for the prisoners, or, significantly, the military policemen on duty, to know who was doing what to whom, and who had the authority to give orders. Civilian employees at the prison were not bound by the Uniform Code of Military Justice, but they were bound by civilian law—though it is unclear whether American or Iraqi law would apply.



One of the employees involved in the interrogations at Abu Ghraib, according to the Taguba report, was Steven Stefanowicz, a civilian working for CACI International, a Virginia-based company. Private companies like CACI and Titan Corp. could pay salaries of well over a hundred thousand dollars for the dangerous work in Iraq, far more than the Army pays, and were permitted, as never before in U.S. military history, to handle sensitive jobs. (In a briefing last week, General Miller confirmed that Stefanowicz had been reassigned to administrative duties. A CACI spokeswoman declined to comment on any employee in Iraq, citing safety concerns, but said that the company still had not heard anything directly from the government about Stefanowicz.)

Stefanowicz and his colleagues conducted most, if not all, of their interrogations in the Abu Ghraib facilities known to the soldiers as the Wood Building and the Steel Building. The interrogation centers were rarely visited by the M.P.s, a source familiar with the investigation said. The most important prisoners—the suspected insurgency members deemed to be High Value Detainees—were housed at Camp Cropper, near the Baghdad airport, but the pressure on soldiers to accede to requests from military intelligence was felt throughout the system.

Not everybody went along. A company captain in a military-police unit in Baghdad told me last week that he was approached by a junior intelligence officer who requested that his M.P.s keep a group of detainees awake around the clock until they began talking. "I said, 'No, we will not do that,' " the captain said. "The M.I. commander comes to me and says, 'What is the problem? We're stressed, and all we are asking you to do is to keep them awake.' I ask, 'How? You've received training on that, but my soldiers don't know how to do it. And when you ask an eighteen-year-old kid to keep someone awake, and he doesn't know how to do it, he's going to get creative.' " The M.I. officer took the request to the captain's commander, but, the captain said, "he backed me up.

"It's all about people. The M.P.s at Abu Ghraib were failed by their commanders—both low-ranking and high," the captain said. "The system is broken—no doubt about it. But the Army is made up of people, and we've got to depend on them to do the right thing."

In his report, Taguba strongly suggested that there was a link between the interrogation process in Afghanistan and the abuses at Abu Ghraib. A few months after General Miller's report, Taguba wrote, General Sanchez, apparently troubled by reports of wrongdoing in Army jails in Iraq, asked Army Provost Marshal Donald Ryder, a major general, to carry out a study of military prisons. In the resulting study, which is still classified, Ryder identified a conflict between military policing and military intelligence dating back to the Afghan war. He wrote, "Recent intelligence collection in support of Operation Enduring Freedom posited a template whereby military police actively set favorable conditions for subsequent interviews."

One of the most prominent prisoners of the Afghan war was John Walker Lindh, the twenty-one-year-old Californian who was captured in December, 2001. Lindh was accused of training with Al Qaeda terrorists and conspiring to kill Americans. A few days after his arrest, according to a federal-court affidavit filed by his attorney, James Brosnahan, a group of armed American soldiers "blindfolded Mr. Lindh, and took several pictures of Mr. Lindh and themselves with Mr. Lindh. In one, the soldiers scrawled 'shithead' across Mr. Lindh's blindfold and posed with him. . . . Another told Mr. Lindh that he was 'going to hang' for his actions and that after he was dead, the soldiers would sell the photographs and give the money to a Christian organization." Some of the photographs later made their way to the American media. Lindh was later stripped naked, bound to a stretcher with duct tape, and placed in a windowless shipping container. Once again, the affidavit said, "military personnel photographed Mr. Lindh as he lay on the stretcher." On July 15, 2002, Lindh agreed to plead guilty to carrying a gun while serving in the Taliban and received a twenty-year jail term. During that process, Brosnahan told me, "the Department of Defense insisted that we state that there was 'no deliberate' mistreatment of John." His client agreed to do so, but, the attorney noted, "Against that, you have that photograph of a naked John on that stretcher."

The photographing of prisoners, both in Afghanistan and in Iraq, seems to have been not random but, rather, part of the dehumanizing interrogation process. The *Times* published an interview last week with Hayder Sabbar Abd, who claimed, convincingly, to be one of the mistreated Iraqi prisoners in the Abu Ghraib photographs. Abd told Ian Fisher, the *Times* reporter, that his ordeal had been recorded, almost constantly, by cameras, which added to his humiliation. He remembered how the camera flashed repeatedly as soldiers told to him to masturbate and beat him when he refused.

One lingering mystery is how Ryder could have conducted his review last fall, in the midst of the prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib, without managing to catch it. (Ryder told a Pentagon press briefing last week that his trip to Iraq "was not an inspection or an investigation. . . . It was an assessment.") In his report to Sanchez, Ryder flatly declared that "there were no military police units purposely applying inappropriate confinement practices." Willie J. Rowell, who served for thirty-six years as an agent of the C.I.D., told me that Ryder was in a bureaucratic bind. The Army had revised its command structure last fall, and Ryder, as provost marshal, was now the commanding general of all military-police units as well as of the C.I.D. He was, in essence, being asked to investigate himself. "What Ryder should have done was set up a C.I.D. task force headed by an 0-6"—full colonel—"with fifteen agents, and begin interviewing everybody and taking sworn statements," Rowell said. "He had to answer questions about the prisons in September, when Sanchez asked for an assessment." At the time, Rowell added, the Army prison system was unprepared for the demands the insurgency placed on it. "Ryder was a man in a no-win situation," Rowell said. "As provost marshal, if he'd turned a C.I.D. task force loose, he could be in harm's way—because he's also boss of the military police. He was being eaten alive."

Ryder may have protected himself, but Taguba did not. "He's not regarded as a hero in some circles in the Pentagon," a retired Army major general said of Taguba. "He's the guy who blew the whistle, and the Army will pay the price for his integrity. The leadership does not like to have people make bad news public." ♦

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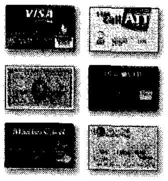

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EXPERIENTIAL EUROPE

by Peter Greenberg

I took my first trip to Europe with my parents when I was twelve. I'll always remember the first time I saw Paris, looking out the window of the Pan Am 707 as it circled to land at Orly; walking up the stairs of the Eiffel Tower; and taking a boat down the Seine.

I still have the wooden box my mother bought for me on Portobello Road in London: "Your first antique," she told me. I can still remember the maid who befriended me in our small Paris hotel; my first gondola ride in Venice; the fast water taxi to Lido; the doorman who played catch with me in Rome. And walking into the Hôtel de Paris in Monaco and hearing my mother say to me "don't touch anything!"

I've been back to Europe about a hundred times since. And I have the frequent-flier miles to prove it. But nothing quite compares to a trip I took there recently.

A year ago, I was going through the filing cabinet in which my mother kept all of her old receipts, which, for no apparent reason, dated back to 1956. There, among her papers, was a folder marked "European Trip," and inside was every ticket stub, postcard, hotel bill, and menu from that first trip forty years ago. With the help of these family mementos, I decided to see if I could duplicate our original itinerary. As luck would have it, the restaurants were all still there. So were the hotels. The only thing missing was Pan Am.

Retracing the family's steps, I walked up the stairs of the Eiffel Tower; strolled through the lobby of the InterContinental hotel; went down the Seine on the Bateaux-Mouche. Nothing had really changed at all: It was just as beautiful, just as new, and yes, just as old as I remembered it.

> " A great trip is not about the destination; it's all about the experience. "

But something else I learned in the intervening years was as true as it had ever been. A great trip is not about the destination; it's all about the *experience*. And not just any experience, but a travel experience you can't have anywhere else, or anywhere else *better*.

Savvy travelers live in a world of experiential one-upmanship. It's not enough to simply see a castle or view a river. It's now essential to help the townspeople restore the castle, or catch a fish in the river, and then go with a local chef to cook it in his kitchen.

You won't find these experiences in most travel brochures; they won't be listed in many guide books. But if you know what to ask for and whom to ask, your trip will be memorable not just because of what you saw, but because you *participated*.

It's easy to argue that there's no such thing anymore as an "undiscovered" destination. But there are countless undiscovered, unexplored experiences. And few destinations this summer offer such experiences more liberally than Europe does.

LEFT TO RIGHT: SCOTLAND, CATHERINE KARNOW/CORBIS; MONACO BALCONY, BO ZAUNDERS/CORBIS; ISABELLE ROZENBAUM PHOTOALTO/PICTURE QUEST; COURTESY RAIL EUROPE; VESPA © FALKEN; © THINKSTOCK/PICTURE QUEST

NOVEL COORDINATES

In England you can do a ten-day June or July tour with your kids through London, Oxford, Bath, Gloucester, York, and Edinburgh tracing the cinematic trail of that boy wizard, Harry Potter. The tour includes the café where J. K. Rowling wrote the first draft of "The Sorcerer's Stone" (www.emco-inc.com/travel). In Scotland, you can eat wild salmon or Arctic char, or better yet, learn to fly fish in the Highlands and catch your own (www.fishing-scotland.net). In Italy, you can spend a week doing your entire tour of the Chianti region being "mod" on a Vespa scooter (www.italybyvespa.com). In France, you can explore the pastoral countryside of the Loire Valley from the vantage point of a hot-air balloon (www.bombardsociety.com). Or, if terra firma suits you better, take a bike tour of Provence or Bordeaux (www.DuVine.com).

FRENCH TWIST

But, to my mind, one of the best ways to experience France (beyond eating and drinking it) is by "barging" through it (www.abercrombiekent.com). Ply the Burgundy canals and rivers on a twelve-passenger luxury barge, which stops in the medieval town of Vézelay, or book passage on a twenty-two passenger craft that meanders for about a week through Alsace-Lorraine.

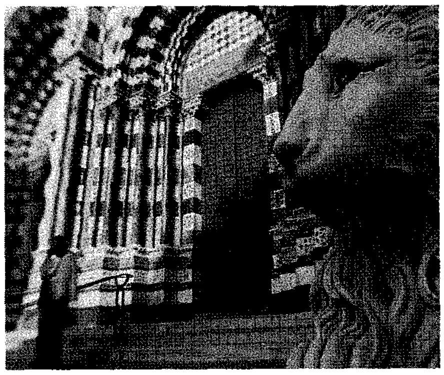
Or make Paris your hub and spend a day or two in the Champagne region—not simply touring the legendary vineyards but participating in the harvest. Each fall, the Drappier family, which runs the small champagne house bearing its name at Urville in the Côte des Bars region, invites visitors to help pick pinot noir and chardonnay grapes. For about sixty dollars, you spend a half-day in the vineyards doing just that. Afterwards, the Drappiers invite you inside their home for a hearty lunch and some great storytelling. When you leave, you're presented with a bottle of their best champagne (www.champagne-drappier.com).

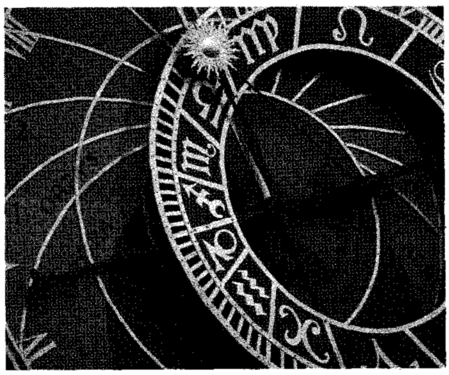
> You can pick champagne grapes during the harvest in Urville. Afterwards, there's a hearty lunch and some great storytelling.

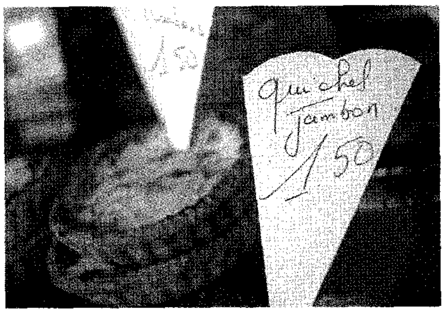
SURPRISING SOJOURNS

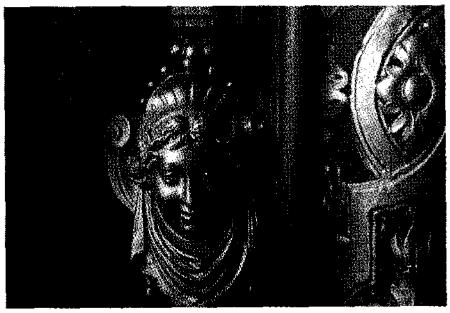
Or, hop a train and head for Switzerland—specifically Lucerne. It has always been one of my favorites since my first family trip.

continued









IMAGES CLOCKWISE: SAN LORENZO CATHEDRAL IN GENOA, BO ZAUNDERS/CORBIS; PRAGUE ASTRONOMICAL CLOCK, DAVE G. HOUSER/CORBIS; COURTESY OF THE INTERCONTINENTAL LE GRAND HOTEL PARIS; © MICHAEL HOLTERMANN

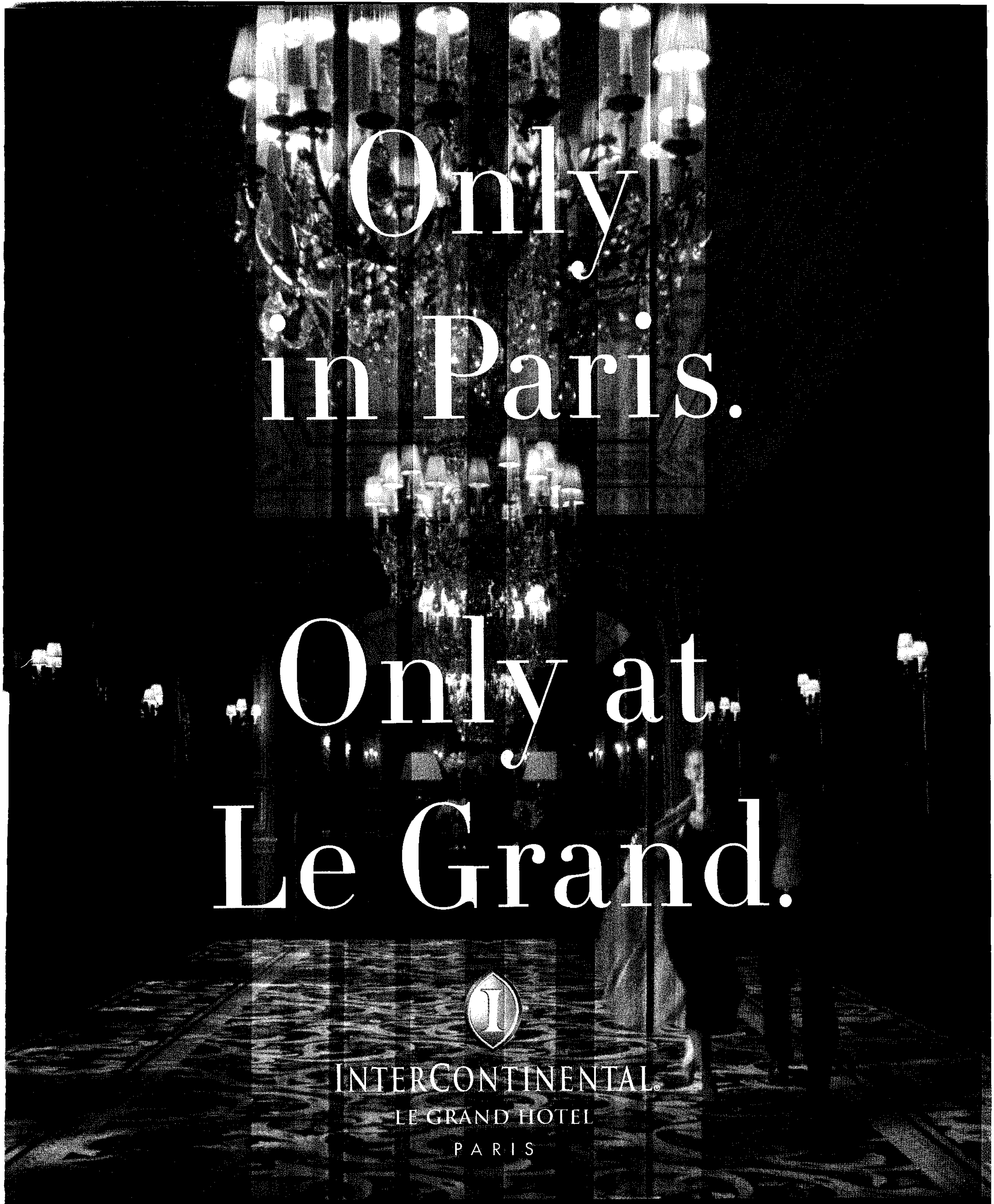
GETTING THERE

Some airlines are making transatlantic flying much easier. **British Airways**—which pioneered the business-class sleeper seat—has new sleeper service for its overnight flights between New York's JFK International and London's Heathrow Airport. There is now a convenient choice of five dining options—before, during, and after a flight—and the cabin is more tranquil, with fewer announcements. The first sleeper flight leaves JFK at 8 P.M. and there's a sleeper flight every hour thereafter through 11 P.M. When it's time to rise and shine, there are complimentary spa treatments at the arrivals lounge in Heathrow (www.britishairways.com).

GETTING AROUND

If you're going to be travelling around Europe, **Rail Europe's Railpass** is the way to go. Railpasses are economical and flexible, but you must buy them in the U.S. before your departure. Available for almost every European country, the good news this year is that you get an immediate dividend because the prices were set in 2003, before the dollar lost ground to the euro.

If you're planning a trip to Paris, say, in August and you want to spend time in the countryside too, you can purchase a France Railpass for a specific number of "travel days" that covers all train destinations within the borders of the country. You can use those days within the period of the pass, and you can travel all day long if you choose. New "two-country" Railpasses are popular, and of course, the more countries you want, the more you will pay. But it may take only one round-trip journey between two distant cities to make a Railpass pay for itself (www.raileurope.com).



InterContinental Le Grand, one of the truly great hotels of Paris, is grand once more. Meticulously restored, it stands imperiously beside the Opera House at the very heart of bustling Parisian life. In fact, it is said that at Le Grand the whole of Paris unfolds before you. Its opulent rooms and suites, discreetly attentive service and world-famous Café de la Paix, create a uniquely Parisian experience for all who stay. So when you next dream of Paris, dream of Le Grand. After all, why go to Paris to visit the landmarks, when you can stay in one?

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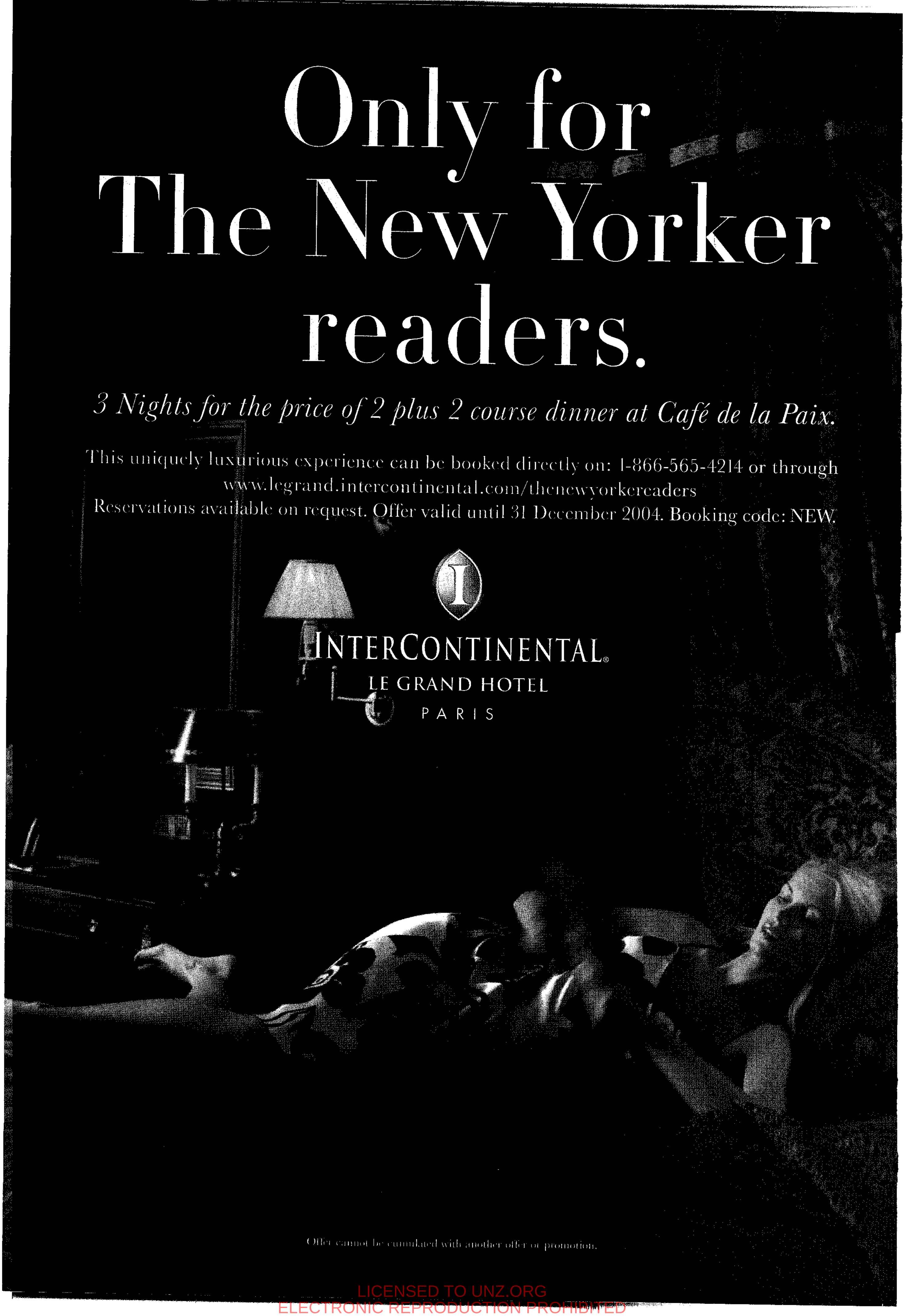

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BALLOONING IN BURGUNDY COURTESY OF THE BOMBARD SOCIETY

"Surprising Sojourns" *continued*

This city is full of surprises. Last year, at Lucerne's Hotel Montana, the general manager Fritz Erni (who calls himself the hotel's "coach") took me into the bar to show me the most extensive collection of single-malt whiskies I'd seen outside of Scotland. The bar also hosted a nightly performance by an amazing jazz group made up of American expatriates who once played in the Duke Ellington and Harry James orchestras. Lucerne continues to surprise me: There's even a Swiss airship tour departing from Neuchâtel that comes with champagne a thousand feet over Lake Lucerne (www.skycruise.ch/info).

Bordering the northeastern Adriatic Sea, Croatia is a hot, new destination for Americans, who have discovered the undeveloped beauty of the Dalmatian Coast. Many visitors are making these discoveries on cruise ships—floating currency hedges because payment is made well in advance. Travellers use the ships for "appetizer" trips to first-time destinations, then later return for more complete journeys. Trogir, a seaside town on the Adriatic, is a UNESCO World Heritage site with a melding of ancient Greek, Roman, and Croatian history and some remarkably well-preserved medieval and renaissance architecture.

It's not unusual for a hot-air balloon to land in the backyard of an estate. Before you know it, the owner's there offering you wine and cheese.

THE EASTERN RISE

I grew up during the Cold War when there were only dreary black-and-white photos of Central and Eastern Europe as my reference for what it was like there. Now, thankfully, the region has rebounded in living color. Just this month, ten Eastern European countries have joined the European Union, and they are all racing to upgrade their infrastructure. Poland—the largest new EU member—is booming, owing to a free-market economy and new hotel development.

Prague, in The Czech Republic, is already well known for its stylish hotels and restaurants, and its bustling expatriate community makes for a vibrant nightlife. This city (once home to native sons Kafka and Čapek) is rich in everything we expect from a traditional European vacation—powerful doses of history, culture, music, and a baroque mix of architecture. Prague also has more than its share of odd legends, some based in fact and some in pure fiction: According to "Libuše," an opera

MINDING YOUR MONEY

- Though the euro and British pound have recently grown strong against the dollar (0.8366 euro; 0.5639 £ at press time), you can minimize sticker shock this summer by looking for travel deals locked in U.S. currency. Many European tour operators, and a group of sixty luxury hotels, including the Ritz in London and the Hotel Meurice in Paris, have already priced everything in U.S. dollars.
- Reserving your room online is another way to save: The recently reopened landmark InterContinental Le Grand Hotel Paris is guaranteeing that its lowest rates are posted on its site (www.parislegrand.intercontinental.com). If you find a lower rate within twenty-four hours of booking your room, the hotel will honor it and give you an additional ten per cent discount!
- Most travellers don't realize that every time they change money overseas, they can be losing as much as ten per cent of their cash on commissions. Avoid these costs by using ATM machines. Take out what you need each time, and get that day's exchange rate without paying any commission. This way, with more than 200,000 ATMs throughout Europe, you can avoid carrying around excessive amounts of cash.

IT'S A SMART IDEA

AT&T is doing its share to help you travel wisely this summer. Its smart, new **AT&T USADirect® Savings Plan** offers several advantages over prepaid cards or making long distance calls from your hotel room through an operator, which can be both frustrating and expensive. With AT&T's calling plan, you can say goodbye to those tenuous overseas connections. And you don't have to be a regular AT&T customer to take advantage of the new plan. AT&T will conveniently bill your calls to your credit card (business or personal). And the plan is good in any of 140 countries worldwide.

You must enroll in the plan before your departure, and if you do, you can count on crisp connections to the states for ninety-nine cents a minute (plus a small surcharge for each call), saving you fifty per cent or more. So listen up: Calling home from across the pond isn't the extravagance it once was. And it's the smart way to go (1-800-222-0300; www.att.com/onerate).

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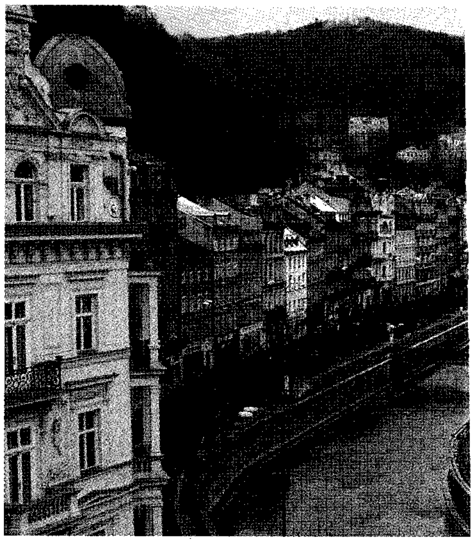
ROYAL TREATMENT

Perhaps no other place on the planet is better suited for people watching than Monaco. The fashionista, aristo enclave is teeming with fine cafés, nonpareil boutiques, and, of course, there's the famed Casino de Monte Carlo. (Lovers of exotic sports cars will note its parking lot's a destination unto itself.) Admission to the gaming hall is twenty dollars, but remember to dress for the occasion (jacket and tie required; www.visitmonaco.com).

Before you go:

- The annual "Monaco Takes New York" fête (May 17–25) will get you in a Monégasque mindset. Weeklong festivities will include a culinary salute to the principality in fine Manhattan restaurants, a vintage race car exhibit, a lecture series, and shopping offers (www.visitmonaco.com).
- The Club Diamond Rouge card, available through the government tourist office, will take you from the Nice airport to the principality in high style. Cardholders are entitled to a helicopter transfer to Monaco, and given the price of the card ($55) it's actually less expensive than taking an airport cab (www.clubdiamantrouge.com).



"The Eastern Rise" *continued*

by Czech composer Bedřich Smetana, Prague was founded by a princess who had a vision of a great city on the Vlatva River.

Venture west of the Czech capital to the fabulous belle epoque spa towns near the German border. In Mariánské Lázne (Marienbad), you can luxuriate in the same baths King Edward VII did (he took holidays there no fewer than nine times), or play a few rounds of golf on the Republic's oldest course that the king helped to establish in 1905 (www.golfml.cz). Goethe, Chopin, and Edison visited Mariánské Lázne. So did Mark Twain (www.marienbad.cz). The largest and best known Bohemian spa town of them all is Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad). Its curative waters were inadvertently discovered during Charles IV's hunting expedition in 1350. Famous for its twelve springs, the spa is located in the valley of the Teplá (warm) River, but trust me, the water in this spa is *hot* (www.karlovyvary.cz).

> " The Czech Republic has more castles and chateaus than any other country in the world. "

The Eastern European experience isn't just about spas. The wilderness region of the Moravian Karst is ideal for camping and exploring. It contains a labyrinth of more than a thousand documented caves and abysses. The exquisite renaissance and baroque towns of Český Krumlov, Telč, and Olomouc are perfectly preserved testa-

ments to an older era. And the surrounding rural countryside has many scenic hiking trails—some leading directly to vineyards that produce excellent Palava and Müller-Thurgau riesling varietals, which are unique to the Republic.

And The Czech Republic has more castles and chateaus per square mile than any other country in the world. There's even an American prince living in one of them. Boston-raised Prince William Lobkowicz had no idea that one day communism would collapse and his family would be able to reclaim their confiscated property. The family holdings now include vineyards, a brewery thirty minutes north of Prague, and Castle-Nelahozeves. This year, the hundredth anniversary of the death of composer Antonin Dvořák, who hailed from Nelahozeves, will be commemorated at Lobkowicz's castle. The prince's story is a long and interesting one, and if you visit, perhaps he'll tell it to you (www.lobkowicz.org).

THIS PAGE, TOP: KARLOVY VARY, SHEPARD SHERBELL/CORBIS; LEFT: MONACO'S HOTEL HERMITAGE, RAY JUNO/CORBIS

SIGHTING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

Northern Europe is also an experiential wonderland. In the whole of Finland, there are only about five million people, but they share two million saunas—more than a million of which are in summer cottages, hotels, and public swimming pools (virtual.finland.fi). But it's what you do before you sauna that matters. In summer, you can hike or canoe around the country. How about a tour of the Finnish islands by sea kayak? You paddle by day and stay overnight in tents throughout the archipelago. Or you can hike across the ice, or travel by Lapp sled. Tours offer paraskiing, and visitors in wetsuits swim in open water. There's also a unique canoeing and river-rafting trip at Jongunjoki in North Karelia, near the Russian border. You'll paddle about forty-five miles and pass through forty separate rapids (www.sma.fi).

Whether you're driven by the heady allure of the Mediterranean or the promise of breathtaking solitude in the far northern climes, plan to discover the pleasures of Europe this summer. And with all those emerging new republics whose charms were off limits for most of our lives, there are intriguing new cities to discover. But wherever your compass takes you, keep in mind that it's not what you see that makes an indelible impression, it's what you experience.

(Peter Greenberg is the travel editor of NBC's *Today* show and the author of "Hotel Secrets from The Travel Detective.")

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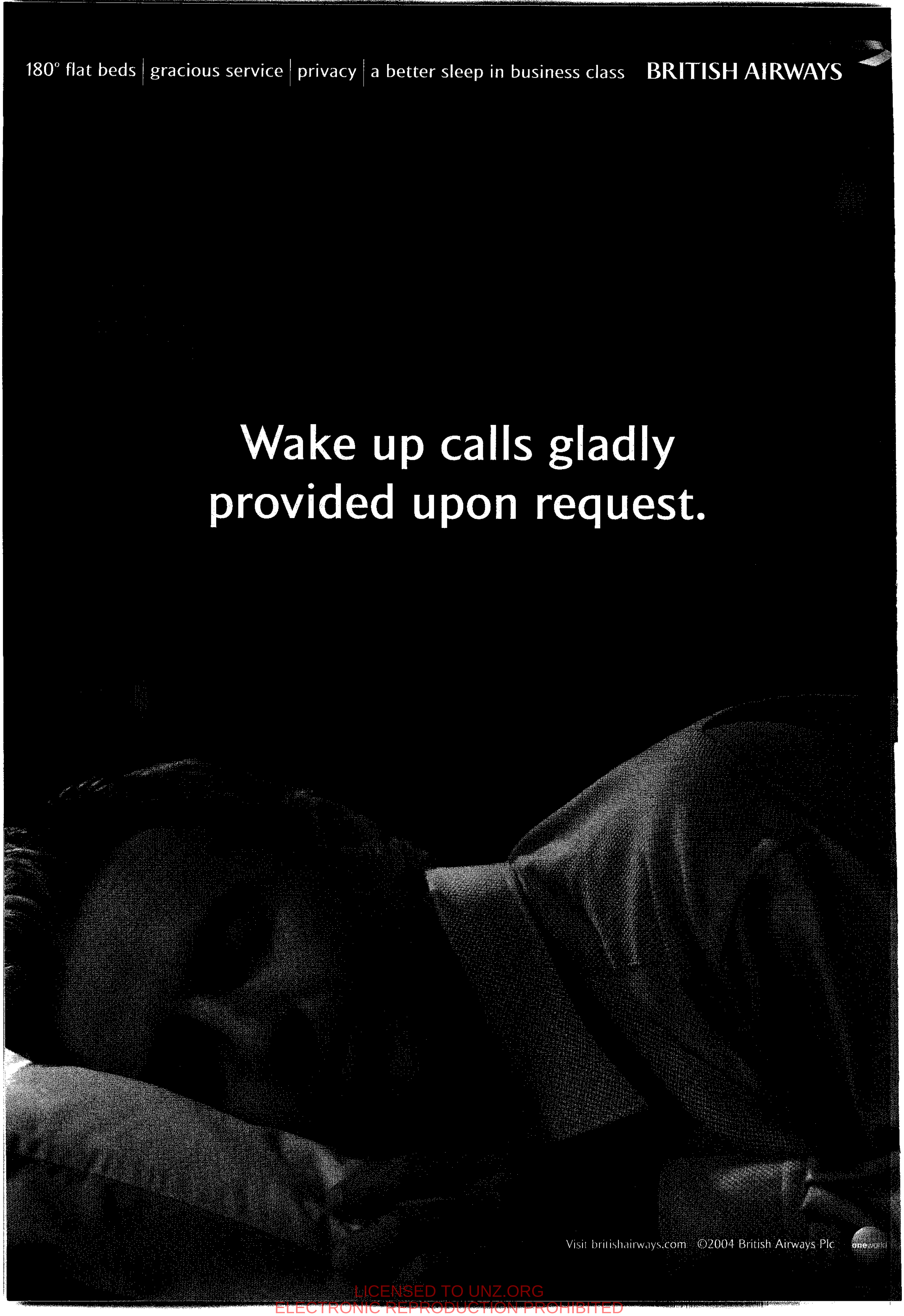

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

A LEAFLET DROPPED OVER AMY WELLER'S HOUSE

BY MICHAEL SACKS

Amy Weller, my girlfriend, my love, please look up. The thousands of brightly colored leaflets that you see cascading down from this rented airplane can mean only one thing: that I am an extremely successful businessman, community leader, boyfriend, bon vivant. There is no denying these facts. To think otherwise would be 100% wrong.

More facts: Mike Sacks is dynamite, strong, captivating. Mike Sacks enjoys reading to senior citizens. Mike Sacks enjoys cooking delicious hot meals for strangers. Mike Sacks enjoys telling amusing stories, softly and clearly, to immigrants, children, and, on occasion, to the infirm. You didn't know about all of this? It's true!

Wow! There is just so much that Amy Weller does not know about her boyfriend, Mike Sacks, whom she has not seen for two weeks and who now goes by the slightly more *exciting, grownup, and respectable* name of MICHAEL SACKS.

But what's that you're thinking? MICHAEL SACKS is an out-of-work furniture salesman, and has been ever since slipping on that spilled Frappuccino outside a Starbucks in the Congressional Strip Mall, Rockville, Maryland (7/4/99)? And what's that you're also thinking? Could this MICHAEL SACKS be the same handsome-ish gentleman who for years pretended to search for a new job each morning, only to sit in the public library all day, sleeping off the effects of deep, unrelenting depression?

Hey, not so fast!

Check out the photorealistic drawings of MICHAEL SACKS that are now being dropped via mini-parachutes into your hands! This new MICHAEL SACKS looks familiar, and yet just the slightest bit . . . different. Check out those MUSCLES! But where did his handlebar mustache go? (Perhaps it no longer exists because MICHAEL SACKS at last came to realize that the mustache, although funny for ironic purposes, did, indeed, look ridiculous.)

You're confused. Could this be for real? Why not? MICHAEL SACKS was *terrific* before, but now he's *superb!*

Do you need additional confirmation of these and other facts?

Please turn on your computer at your earliest convenience and check out the new Web site specializing in all things MICHAEL SACKS: www.michaelsacksmichaelsacks.com (please note: www.michaelsacks.com was taken). There you will find a preview of what can be expected from the New & Improved MICHAEL SACKS in the exciting year ahead:

—The porch, formerly attached to Amy Weller's house, to be rebuilt after last summer's errant firecracker explosion! (June, 2004)

—The letter of apology to be sent to Amy Weller's parents, regarding last winter's unfortunate automobile "catastrophe"! (August, 2004)

—The cosmetic surgery to remove that tattoo of a third eye! (October, 2004?)

—The cosmetic surgery to remove that tattoo of a fourth eye! (November, 2004?)

(Additional exciting projects to be announced on July 14, 2004, at a press conference at T.G.I. Friday's, Rte. 355!!!)

Amy Weller, didja know???

—That MICHAEL SACKS has at last, and of his own accord, thrown out his entire collection of T-shirts with funny sayings (including his very favorite: "Born to Pump!")?

—That MICHAEL SACKS has a newfound respect for Amy Weller's need for peace and quiet, and will support her in this need by not practicing the knee-cymbals at all hours of the day and night, even though he's dreamed of learning how to play them since seeing Dick Van Dyke in "Mary Poppins"?

—That MICHAEL SACKS no longer believes that crafting homemade ceramic bongs in the basement of Amy Weller's house is a proper way in which to earn extra money, even though Phish is set to come through town next month and business projections have never, ever looked better?

Amy Weller, what is in a name, exactly? If that name is MICHAEL SACKS, tons!

MICHAEL SACKS = A man who isn't afraid to show his feelings, who can now *cry*, who will no longer express *sadness* by locking himself in the rec room and playing Middle-earth-themed video games for two days straight, often while nude.

MICHAEL SACKS = A man who looks forward to moving back into Amy Weller's house and acting *responsibly*, this time by contributing to the mortgage with authentic *currency* and not with scraps of paper with "Will Pay Later" written on them in crayon.

MICHAEL SACKS = A man with *goals and ambition*, a boyfriend whom Amy Weller can be proud to bring to public gatherings, who will no longer *embarrass* Amy Weller at said events by getting drunk and performing his imitation of two wild monkeys coupling.

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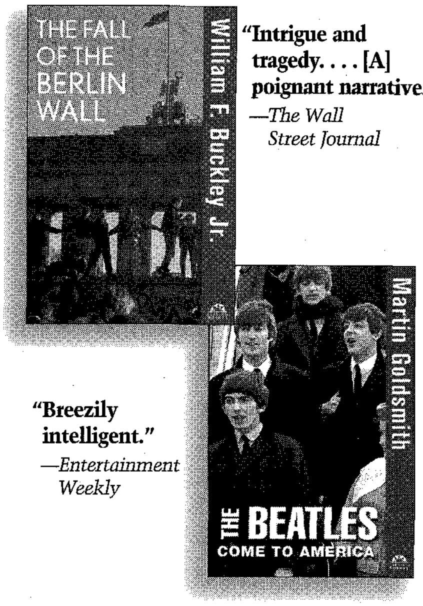

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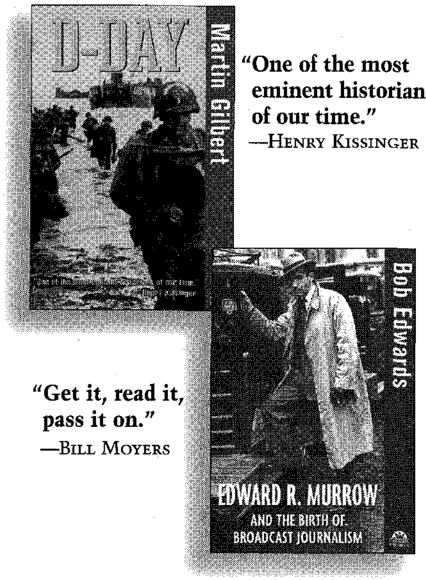

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THE SPORTING SCENE

PROJECT KNUCKLEBALL

Vindication for an awkward art.

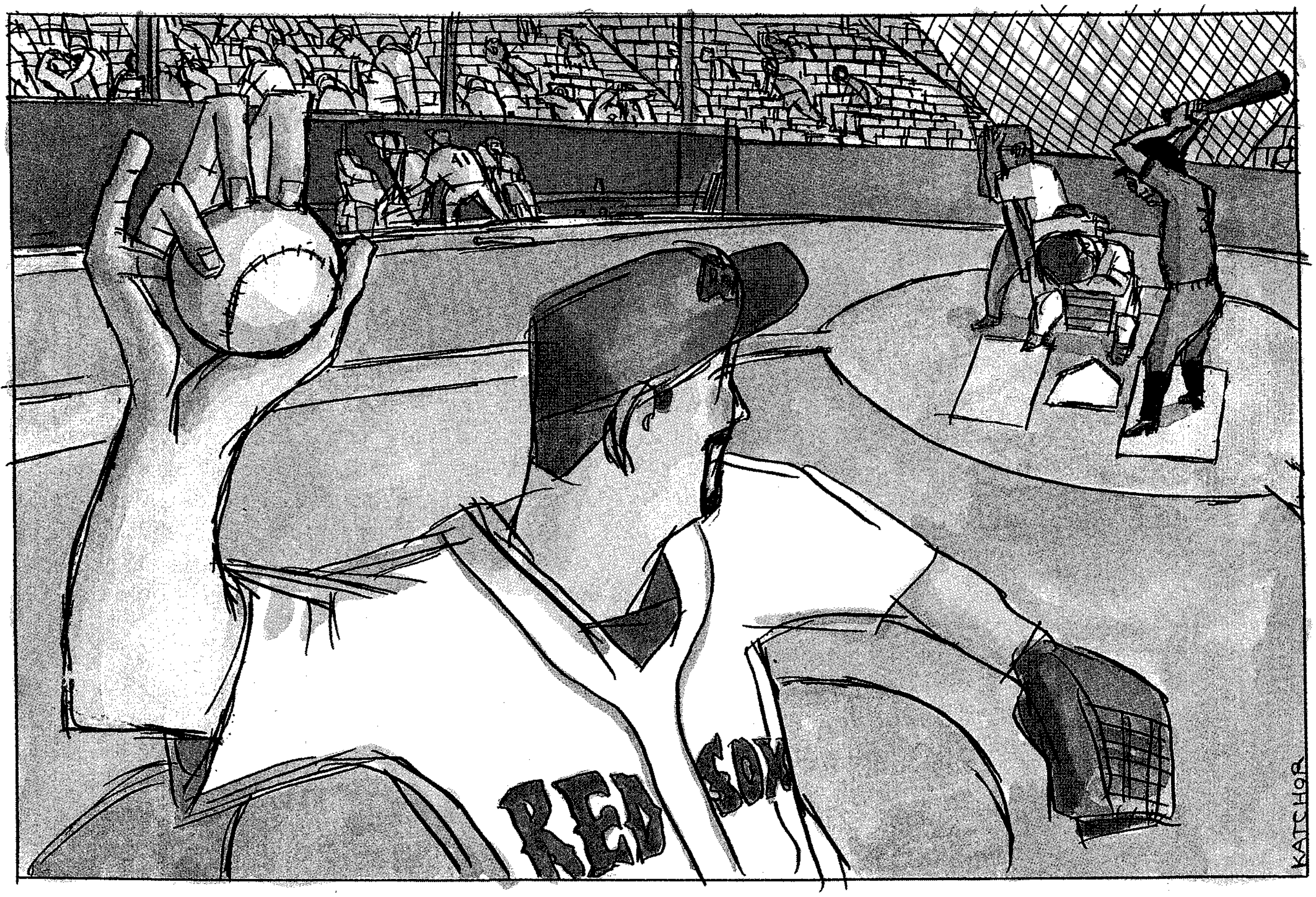
BY BEN McGRATH

As season-ending home runs go, Aaron Boone's eleventh-inning shot for the Yankees against the Red Sox last October looks pretty unimpressive in retrospect. Watch the video replay once more: a paunchy, goateed pitcher, his cap pulled down low, begins to wind up for what appears to be a practice pitch—hasn't a batter stepped in already?—and releases the ball from a contorted claw's grip, right pinkie finger extended, with a prim, abbreviated follow-through, the right foot landing in quick succession after the left, as though in a limp. The miles-per-hour indicator flashes "69" at the top of the screen as the ball floats, then hangs. If you didn't know better, you might not believe that the Boston pitcher—he's quietly walking off the field now, as Yankee Stadium erupts with joy—intended to get Boone out, or that he had any business being on the mound in a post-season Game Seven in the first place, much less during extra innings. In fact, though, Tim Wakefield, the pitcher in question, had beaten the Yankees more often than any pitcher all season by doing much the same thing. Sixty-nine m.p.h. is routine for a sophomore in high school; it is on the fast side for a Wakefield delivery.

The Yankees and the Red Sox are engaged in what is often called an arms race. This past off-season, the two teams, already possessing stratospheric payrolls, went about adding more firepower to their rosters. The Sox, most notably, added a couple of hard-throwing All-Star pitchers (New York allowed fewer runs last season), while the Yanks added a couple of All-Star sluggers (Boston scored more). In Fort Myers, on the first Sunday in March, the Yankees arrived at City of Palms Park (Florida's Fenway) to play the Red Sox in a meaningless early spring-training game that was nonetheless billed by various players and writers as "Game Eight"—the continuation of last fall's epic series, which seemed merely to have paused for the winter. Before the game, several fans paraded around the grandstand carrying signs taunting Alex Rodriguez, New York's studly new third baseman (he'd recently posed with his wife for *Sports Illustrated's* swimsuit issue), and alluding to the simmering steroids controversy (the Yankees' new right fielder, Gary Sheffield, was among those called to testify before a grand jury). Obscured by all the commotion was the fact that, in this cold-war buildup, the weakest arm may still make all the difference.

Two miles down the road, at about the same time, a twenty-four-year-old former art student named Charlie Zink was throwing from a practice mound at the Red Sox' sprawling Player Development Complex, while the rest of the hundred or so minor-leaguers in the Boston organization, spread out over five diamonds, took batting practice and shagged fly balls. Zink was twelve when he first saw Wakefield—then a rookie with the Pittsburgh Pirates—pitching in the National League playoffs, in 1992. Now, although he is capable of throwing standard-issue jock heat, Zink was trying to mimic the Wakefield delivery as well as he could, right down to the apparent lack of exertion and the junior-varsity speed. From a side view, there was nothing at all remarkable about Zink's pitches, except that occasionally the catcher didn't catch them. In those instances, the coach who was standing behind the mound tended to exclaim, "That is outstanding!" Zink, who went undrafted as a fastball pitcher, is, at the Red Sox' urging, reinventing himself as a rare specialist: a knuckleballer. With Wakefield, one of only two knuckleball pitchers currently on a major-league roster, and now Zink, the Red Sox are cornering the market on low-grade weaponry. Project Knuckleball is only just beginning its second year, but, according to Baseball

Prospectus, a leading baseball-analysis Web site, Zink is already the Red Sox' top-rated prospect.



Last year, Tim Wakefield, one of only two knuckleballers on a major-league roster, beat the Yankees more often than any other pitcher.

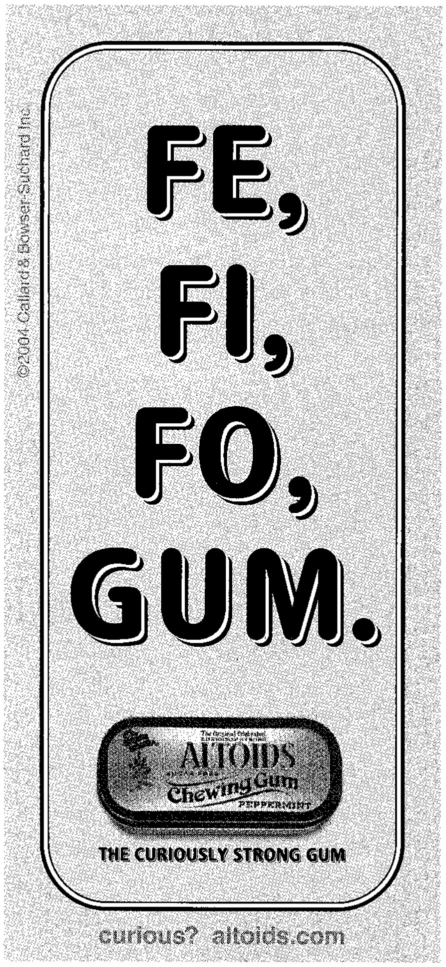
BEN KATCHOR

The knuckleball—also known as the knuckler, the fingernail ball, the fingertip ball, the flutterball, the floater, the dancer, the bug, the butterfly ball, the moth, the bubble, the ghostball, the horseshoe, the dry spitter, and, curiously, the spinner—has been around, in one form or another, for nearly as long as professional baseball itself, though for much of that time it has been regarded with suspicion. Spinning is precisely what it does not do. In fact, a lack of spin is about the only identifying characteristic of the pitch. There is no right way to hold a knuckleball when throwing it (seams, no seams; two fingers, three), and no predictable flight pattern once it leaves the hand. "Butterflies aren't bullets," the longtime knuckleballer Charlie Hough once said. "You can't aim 'em—you just let 'em go." The pitch shakes, shimmies, wobbles, drops—it *knuckles*, as they say. Which is doubly confusing, because the term "knuckleball" is itself a kind of misnomer, a holdover from the pitch's largely forgotten infancy.

Depending on how you look at it, the first knuckleball was probably thrown in the late nineteenth century, by a bricklayer named Toad Ramsey, or shortly after the turn of the century, by the famous junkball ace Eddie Cicotte. Ramsey, who pitched for Louisville in the old American Association, severed a tendon in his left middle finger (that was his pitching hand), and thereafter adopted a peculiar grip, in which he curled his middle fingertip on the top of the ball, exposing the knuckle. His newfangled pitch probably more closely resembled what is now known as a knuckle curve—a pitch that, despite the name, bears little in-flight resemblance to Wakefield's floater. (The knuckle curve, thrown today by the Yankees' Mike Mussina, is released with topspin, or overspin, and so does not even belong in the flutterball's extended low-spin family.)

Cicotte, for his part, discovered early in his career that by pressing the knuckles of his middle and index fingers against the ball's surface, and steadying the ball with his thumb, he could produce a spinless pitch, which would behave erratically and set batters on edge. In 1908, pitching with the Red Sox, he took the nickname Knuckles—by which point others had already begun to figure out that the same flitting effect could be achieved, and with greater control, by simply clamping down on the rawhide with one's fingernails. The actual use of the knuckles in pushing the ball plateward has essentially been out of style for ninety years.

All told, there have been about seventy pitchers who have entrusted their livelihoods, at one point or another, to the vagaries of the knuckleball (by the count of baseball writer Rob Neyer). Some have preferred to throw a faster, harder-breaking version of the pitch, which arrives in the seventy-to-seventy-five-m.p.h. range, exhibiting only minor turbulence en route to a crash landing. Others have favored a more arcing, directionally indecisive floater—the Pittsburgh Pirates slugger Willie Stargell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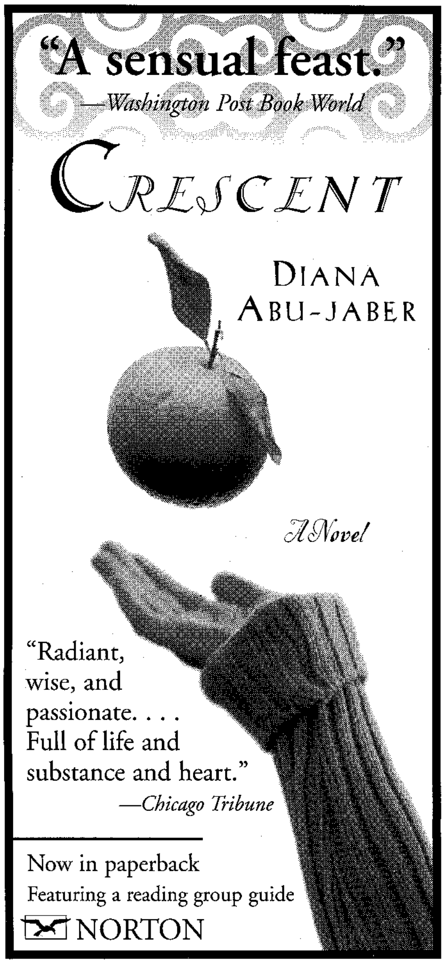
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called it "a butterfly with hiccups"—which takes care to obey interstate speed limits. Neither enterprise is a growth industry. In the past fifty years, the fluttering ranks have dwindled to just a few per generation.

Once comfortably ensconced in the flourishing community of oddball pitches—spitball, palm ball, shine ball, eephus—the knuckleball has fallen victim, in recent decades, to a prejudice against deception and a fear of the unknown. If a kid throwing ninety-five m.p.h. has a bad outing, scouts chalk it up to growing pains; at least he can *bring it.* If a knuckleballer flounders, it is proof, somehow, that the craft itself—just *look* at it—is unreliable.

"Catchers hate it," Jim Bouton, the author of "Ball Four: My Life and Hard Times Throwing the Knuckleball in the Big Leagues," said recently. "Nobody likes to warm up with you. Coaches don't respect it. You can pitch seven good innings with a knuckleball, and as soon as you walk a guy they go, 'See, there's that damn knuckleball.' "

The pitch is minimally taxing from a physical standpoint, and thus affords its practitioners the ability to pitch in virtually any situation, on any day. Knuckleball pitchers seldom need to ice their arms after working. They lift weights only sparingly, and almost never get injured. The knuckleball favors old age—or at least doesn't discourage it—and forgives weakness. These are considerable advantages, yet the pitch is, for the same reasons, taken as an affront to the entrenched jock ethic of blood, sweat, and tears.

"Baseball science isn't rocket science," Robert K. Adair, a professor emeritus at Yale and the author of "The Physics of Baseball," says. "It's a lot harder." To understand how a knuckleball works, it helps to have a basic familiarity with Bernoulli's principle, the Magnus effect, and the Prandtl boundary-layer theory, for a start. This much is easy: the stitches on a baseball interrupt the flow of air around the leather surface. Then it gets complicated. The air meeting the ball speeds up as it's disturbed, to compensate for the initial holdup. This increased airspeed causes the pressure (on the side of the interrupting, forwardmost stitch) to drop. The ball follows the lower pressure.

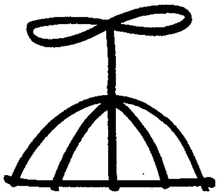
That's the short story, at least. Wake, drag, aerodynamic regime changes in midflight: all these and more come into play. When the knuckleball is dancing with particular verve and inspiration, as Wakefield's did (pre-Boone) against the Yankees last fall, batters and their fans tend to argue, only half in jest, that it is unfair—unhittable, even. ("You're better off trying to hit Wakefield when you're in a drunken stupor," the Yankees first baseman Jason Giambi said recently.) This may in fact literally be the case. "A knuckleball can change so close to the batter that he cannot physiologically adjust to it, so in some sense it's impossible to hit a breaking knuckleball," Adair says. "I mean, you can close your eyes and swing, and you *might* hit it . . ."

Grumpy catchers may well have a point, too: maybe all those passed balls are not their fault. "The fastest possible voluntary reaction time of a person is about a hundred and fifty milliseconds," Adair says. "And during that time the ball can change its direction so much that you can't catch it." Adair's conclusion: "When Tim Wakefield is on, it's pretty tough—tough to hit, tough to catch."

And when he's off? "All you need to know is that if you put any kind of a spin on it at all it'll travel about four hundred and seventy-five feet in the opposite direction," Bouton likes to say.

Tim Wakefield was not supposed to be a major-league pitcher. He was a standout high-school ballplayer in Melbourne, Florida, where he still lives. Like most good young players, he pitched some, but mainly he played first base. He was a power hitter. In college, at nearby Florida Tech, Wakefield broke the school home-run record, and in 1988, his senior year, he was drafted by the Pirates. He reported that summer to Watertown, New York, where the Pirates had a Class A minor-league affiliate, and promptly set about proving to the club that selecting him had been a mistake: he hit .189 and struck out more than once every three times at bat.

Woody Huyke, one of Pittsburgh's developmental coaches, saved Wakefield's career. He saw Tim playing catch one day in the spring of 1989, during warmups, when many players goof around with sideline knuckleballs. (Like card tricks, everybody's got one.) Tim's ball was visibly of a different order from any garden-variety stunt pitch. "I thought, Jesus Christ," Huyke recalled recently. "I didn't say anything, I just played dumb. And then two days later we had an organizational meeting, because, you know, he was on the bubble as an infielder. I said, 'Before you let him go, I'd like to see him on the mound, 'cause he's got a good knuckleball.' So they kept him around. They told him, 'Either you pitch or go home.' "



Wakefield, as a boy, had learned about the knuckleball the hard way—by trying to catch it. ("You don't catch the knuckleball," Yankees manager Joe Torre, himself a former catcher, has said. "You defend against it.") His father, at the end of their back-yard throwing sessions, would invariably end up pitching him butterflies. "Dad comes home from work, and I'm, you know, 'Let's go play catch,' " Wakefield told me. "He was tired, and he wanted to go inside. So the knuckleball was his way of trying to tire *me* out, 'cause I didn't want to have to catch it—it'd go by me and I'd have to go pick it up. It was kind of a subtle way of Dad saying, 'Time to go, let's quit.' "

At the time of Huyke's intervention, there were just two knuckleballers in the bigs—Charlie Hough, who was then forty-one and pitching for the Texas Rangers, and Tom Candiotti, thirty-one and with the Cleveland Indians—and no promising apprentices. "We are, unjustly, in the twilight of an era," one premature eulogy, by the former Rangers consultant Craig Wright, read. "We may be witnessing the last days of one of baseball's most baffling, most charming, and most effective pitches."

Reluctantly, Wakefield took to the mound—and within a few short years, as if by some kind of extended practical joke, there he was on national television in 1992, the rookie ace, in young Charlie Zink's living room, winning two games in the playoffs. Then, just as suddenly, he lost it. Flutterballs are exceedingly difficult to control, and the ability to land pitches anywhere near the strike zone with consistency is what separates a true knuckleballer from a Sunday-afternoon showoff. Wakefield walked twenty-eight batters over a three-game stretch in April of 1993. He spent half of that season, and all of the next, in the minors, trying to regain his confidence; he lost twenty games and won just eight. In the spring of 1995, two years after he had been the Opening Day starter, the Pirates handed him his pink slip.

It seems fitting that a pitch as fickle as the knuckleball would produce a career filled (in the early going, at least) with herky-jerky ups and downs, but it would be a mistake to think that this volatility reflects the person. Wakefield is a quiet, studious-seeming man, who does everything—from walking to playing the guitar to singing harmony—with visible deliberation. (One of his favorite songs is "Take It Easy," by the Eagles.) He likes to call himself the "blue-collarite" on the pitching staff, a label that is reinforced by his friendship with various country musicians. Last winter, he made a guest appearance on the reality show "Average Joe."

"It's not a macho-type thing," Wakefield said recently, about his unlikely livelihood. "I had to come up with a way to get outs, and that's the bottom line as a pitcher. It doesn't matter if you roll it underhand, as long as you get outs." He works hard, still, at practicing his fastball and curveball, each of which he throws between five and ten per cent of the time, to preserve at least some element of surprise. "I've hit eighty on the radar gun maybe half a dozen times," he said, cracking a restrained smile. "That's a huge accomplishment for me. I get high fives when I get to the dugout."

Wakefield was picked up for cheap by the Red Sox shortly after the Pirates cut him loose, and the accidental pitcher is now, improbably, starting his tenth season in Boston, which makes him the longest-serving member of the club. In the history of the Red Sox franchise, only three pitchers have appeared in more games or struck out more batters. Wakefield is thirty-seven, an age that spells retirement planning for ordinary players, and he is just entering his prime.

"I plan on pitching as long as I can, as long as I'm having fun," Wakefield told me earlier this year. He said that last season was the most fun he'd ever had in his baseball life. "I kind of look at it now

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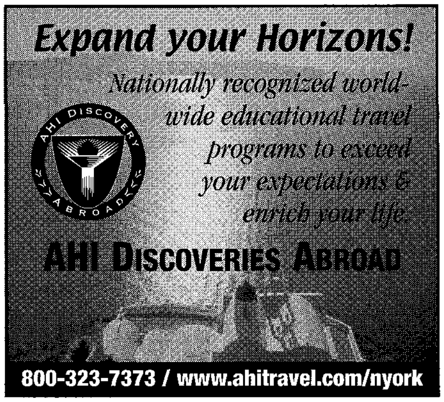

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as something special. It's an art. It's something that may be a lost art here, soon, if somebody else doesn't come up and start throwing it again."

Knuckleball pitchers are not just a rare but also a close-knit breed—the Fraternal Order of Knuckleheads, bound by their shared experiences of alienation and finger cramps. "We always root for each other across the miles," Bouton says. "We all understand we're a little weird."

Barry Meister, Wakefield's agent, also represents Steve Sparks, the other knuckleballer currently pitching in the majors. (Sparks, who is thirty-eight, has enjoyed less success than Wakefield, shuttling from team to team. He began this season as the fifth starter, and spot reliever, for the Arizona Diamondbacks.) "It's like some strange disease—they all hang out together," Meister told me, before the start of spring training. "I called Sparks last week and he said, 'Hey, I'm out in California, staying at Charlie Hough's house, playing golf.' "

The uniform number 49, worn by Wakefield, and previously by Hough and Candiotti, serves as an unofficial pledge pin, honoring Hoyt Wilhelm, the most famous mid-century knuckleballer, whose career reflects many of the perks and humiliations of the tribe. Wilhelm was a few months shy of his thirtieth birthday when he was finally called upon to throw his first big-league pitch, for the New York Giants, in 1952. Over the course of twenty years, serving reliably as both a starter and a reliever, he was released four times, sold twice, traded four times, and offered up once to the expansion draft. Yet when he retired, just a week before his fiftieth birthday, he'd managed to pitch in more games than any player in history, and he was later inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Now that Wilhelm is gone (he died in 2002), the undisputed Grand Poobah is Phil Niekro, or Knucksie, as he is known among his brethren (though not to his brother Joe, another knuckler; together they amassed five hundred and thirty-nine wins, the most of any sibling pair in baseball). Knucksie won two hundred and eight games—of his career three hundred and eighteen—after turning thirty-five. He is now sixty-five, and the resident prankster of the crew, an amateur magician always eager to impress with his sleight of hand.

Over the years, despite their scarcity, the knuckleball bunch have produced more than their fair share of bizarre and noteworthy feats. The last pitcher to start both games of a doubleheader, Wilbur Wood, was a knuckleballer. (That was for the White Sox, against the Yankees, in 1973. He lost both games.) And who can forget Eddie Rommel, a bug-tosser for the Philadelphia A's? On July 10, 1932, having already pitched on each of the previous two days, the thirty-four-year-old Rommel threw batting practice, took a breather for the first inning, and then came out of the bullpen, in the bottom of the second, to pitch for what turned out to be seventeen straight innings over four hours, along the way yielding twenty-nine hits and fourteen runs. (He won, 18–17. It was the last win of his career.)

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Baseball manicures are a popular topic of conversation when any two or three from the gang get together. Knucksie once recommended that Sparks scuff his nails on concrete before pitching, to achieve the ideal gripping texture—a strategy that backfired when Sparks shattered one of his nails in the process. Others have tried laminating their nails with horse-hoof solution as a sort of reinforcement. "I did all sorts of things," Bouton told me. "I even tried filing saw teeth in my fingers to sort of get, like, an alligator grip on the ball, but the little points would break off—and they weren't too popular in bed, either."

The weather—artificial or real—comes up frequently, too. Most knucklers agree that wind in the face is good (anything to add resistance and turbulence), while wind blowing from behind spells doom. Heat and humidity are welcome, unless you're pitching in a dome; for whatever reason, the consensus seems to be that central air-conditioning can work wonders. Boston's Doug Mirabelli, who catches Wakefield exclusively (knucklers often get their own personal backstops), has observed that the SkyDome in Toronto causes an extra hiccup per pitch. And in the Astrodome in the seventies, conspiracy theorists will swear, the temperature was always suspiciously cool—the A.C. set to full blast—on days when Joe Niekro was starting for the home team.

All that's missing is an actual frat house, a fact that hasn't been lost on Bouton. "I just hope that one day there may be a home for aged knuckleball pitchers to go to," he said. "You know, like polka meetings, the Friars Club. That'd be nice. You could spend your final days rocking on a porch talking about some of the great games, laughing at all the broken bones that you've created for catchers, broken backs for batters trying to swing and swat it."

Charlie Zink, the Red Sox' knuckler-in-training, had two main ambitions as he entered his late teens, neither of which was to be a pro baseball player. He thought he might like to join the P.G.A. Tour—golf suited his laid-back demeanor—or else get involved with law enforcement. "My parents were both wardens at Folsom State Prison, and I was thinking of doing something like that," he said this spring. "But then art school came along."

Art school was the Savannah College of Art and Design, known to its students as SCAD. Zink had been attending junior college in Sacramento, and playing on the baseball team there, but he found the atmosphere too competitive. "I was kind of burned out on baseball," he said. "I just wanted a change of scenery. I was looking for something easier at the time, and SCAD seemed like a good fit."

SCAD had a baseball team—a perfectly uncompetitive Division III team—whose coach, strangely, was Luis Tiant, the nineteen-seventies Red Sox star famous for his pretzel-twist pitching motion. Tiant took a liking to Zink, who seemed game to try anything—even turning his back on home plate during his windup, as Tiant himself had done. Though Zink graduated with roughly twice as many losses as wins on his record, Tiant got him a spring tryout with the Red Sox in 2002. Zink at least had a strong arm—he could throw ninety-four m.p.h.—and, well, he had a distinctive pitching motion; it was worth a shot.

Zink's reincarnation story, set in the summer of 2002, is similar to Wakefield's, only more vivid. "I was just getting ready to throw one day, messing around like everyone else does, and our trainer asked me to throw a knuckleball," he told me. The trainer was not wearing a mask, and Zink's pitch—inspired by that long-ago glimpse of Wakefield as a rookie on national TV—danced its way squarely into his eye socket. "Our pitching coördinator was there to see it," Zink went on. "He told me to throw it a few more times, and I hit a few more guys in the chest."

If the black eye sealed Zink's conversion from Tiant protégé to Wakefield disciple, he didn't realize it at the time. He even went home to California for the winter and hit the gym ("All off-season, I was just lifting my butt off"), hoping to increase his arm strength and velocity for the following year. When he showed up in camp last spring, the Red Sox had new plans for him, and an increase in velocity was not among them. Wakefield told him, in a private knuckling tutorial, that in those infrequent instances when he'd be throwing fastballs, he ought to throw them slower than he was capable of—he ought to throw them from a half-assed knuckleball windup, that is, not a Tiant Twist—so as not to tip the batter off.

"The only thing I don't like about it is I still think of myself as an athlete," Zink, who has broad shoulders and an effortless grace that disintegrates when he throws his knuckler, told me. "And most people don't think of knuckleballers as athletes, which kind of makes me upset." A little early success goes a long way toward erasing such concerns. Late last summer, Zink was promoted from Class A Sarasota to Class AA Portland, where he twice carried no-hitters into the eighth inning. "My first double-A game, I was pitching in Binghamton against the Mets," he said. "And the second hitter I faced pulled a rib-cage muscle from swinging so hard. He had to get taken out of the game. I mean, that was one of the funniest things I've seen." Zink has even started having dreams about the knuckleball—about different grips and release points, and the inimitable flight patterns they can produce.

It takes a certain kind of seven-year-old—possessed of an extraordinary sense of his own limitations, or else an unimaginative fantasy life—to watch a professional baseball game and immediately identify with the oldest, slowest person on the field, the guy who, if not for the uniform, could plausibly pass for a math teacher. Sean Flaherty, of Englewood, Florida, was that kid. In April of 1993, the expansion Florida Marlins

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played their first-ever game, and Sean's dad pulled him out of first grade to watch at a local sports bar. The Marlins' starting pitcher that day was the leather-faced forty-five-year-old Charlie Hough, still hanging on after all those years, throwing ghostballs in slo-mo.

"Sean was just mesmerized," Mike Flaherty, his father, remembers. "From that point on, he grew his nails out, and we played catch every day. I had bruises all over my body."

Sean Flaherty is now a senior in high school, and possibly the only full-fledged knuckleballer pitching for any secondary school, anywhere. (Like Wakefield, he throws knucklers at least eighty-five per cent of the time.) He is five feet ten and not an obvious athlete—his aspect is that of a firefly chaser—but next year, against all odds, he will be suiting up for the University of Miami, a Division I powerhouse. Sean is also hoping to become the first of his breed ever to be selected in the amateur draft, next month. (And also, presumably, the first pitcher ever drafted who cannot hit eighty on a radar gun. His knuckleball ranges from forty-five to sixty-eight m.p.h., and his fastball tops out in the seventies.)

The day of Tim Wakefield's first appearance this spring, Sean's team, the Lemon Bay Manta Rays, had a game of their own in Fort Myers, against the local Riverdale Raiders. Sean arrived at the field late, wearing a tuxedo. He plays tuba in the Florida West Coast Youth Symphony and was coming straight from a performance.

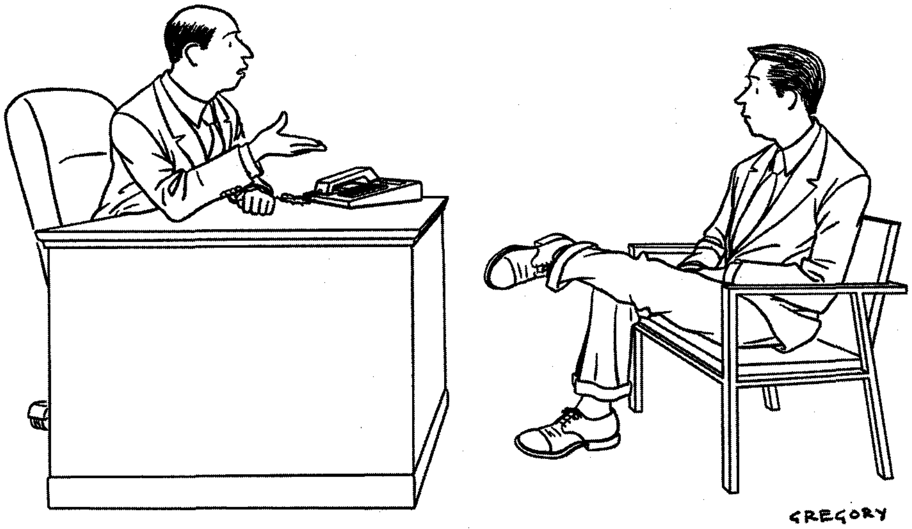
"Sean's journey has been unique," Mike Flaherty said, sitting in the bleachers. "He's a pioneer—he really is." During the regular season, Mike said, he and Sean catch all of Wakefield's starts on satellite TV at the same sports bar where the journey began. Last year, they also made regular trips to Sarasota and befriended Charlie Zink. (Sean, who has been throwing the knuckleball for much longer, offered Zink some pointers.)

It was the fourth inning, and Lemon Bay was down, 10–3, by the time Sean took the mound. Riverdale, as it happened, was coached by the former Red Sox left fielder Mike Greenwell. (His son Bo is a freshman first baseman.) Greenwell, who said he'd hit knuckleballs quite well during his playing days, imparted what wisdom he could to his players: "Swing under it—the ball will always drop. Try to lift it." (This undoubtedly beats the famous hitting coach Charlie Lau's advice: "There are two theories on hitting the knuckleball. Unfortunately, neither of them works.") Sean warmed up to the song "Eye of the Tiger," played on someone's boom box, and then floated his bubbles: three innings, four strikeouts, one run allowed.

After the game (Riverdale won, 11–5), I joined Sean on the field for a crash course in knuckleball catching. When I'd told Dave Clark, an amateur flutterball fanatic who sent me his "Knucklebook" manuscript, that I planned to play catch with a serious knuckleballer, he said I should make sure to wear a cup. "Wear a mask, too," he added. "And stand behind the backstop." I had neither a cup nor a mask, nor an oversized softball mitt (which is what big-league knuckleball catchers traditionally use), but I took my chances, and tried to remember the advice that Doug Mirabelli had given me earlier in the day: let it travel as far as possible; don't reach out to meet it, or you're asking for trouble. The first pitch did a little jig about midway, and then darted down and to my right. I got some glove on the ball, but not enough to squeeze it. On two occasions, the ball swerved particularly late—I'd like to believe these were instances such as Professor Adair described, where it is physiologically impossible to react—and struck my unprotected throwing hand.

"How's it moving?" Sean called out at one point, to my surprise. Then I recalled something Wakefield had told me. "I can't really see it," he'd said. "They say it shakes a lot—it goes back and forth. The only thing I can see is the break down or the break to the left or to the right." For the full visual effect, catcher is where it's at.

"We call that one the spinner," Sean said at another moment, after the ball he'd just thrown forged a path almost like that of a roller coaster turning over. The "spinner" is what Hoyt Wilhelm used to call his corkscrew knuckler, perhaps because the pitch itself—not the ball—appears to spin around an invisible axis. Accomplished knuckleballers manage to throw it once in a while, usually by accident—it seems to require a lone, slow rotation of the ball while in



"At this company, we think of ourselves as one big family, and we'd like you to be the quirky but lovable teen-age daughter."

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orbit. It is, in a sense, the profession's prize elixir—"If you could bottle one up, that'd be the one you want to keep," Steve Sparks says—and catching it is a slightly nerve-racking and dizzying experience. Not just for a novice, either: Mirabelli warned me that the corkscrew "kind of hypnotizes you."

The first pitch of this season's ongoing Yankees-Red Sox showdown was thrown by—who else?—Tim Wakefield: a lazily arriving called strike. Boston won the game, 6–2, and the Yankees' three heaviest hitters, Alex Rodriguez, Gary Sheffield, and Jason Giambi, failed to register a hit. Notwithstanding the Game Seven relief appearance, with its Boone misfire (home-run balls remain his Achilles' heel; no Sox pitcher has allowed more dingers in his Boston career), Wakefield has now beaten the Yankees in four consecutive starts, holding New York's batters to a pathetic .163 average.

"I don't want to see that thing again," Giambi told reporters afterward, and later quipped, "They should pitch him every day against us."

Wakefield didn't lose his first game until the beginning of May, when he was outduelled on ESPN by an unheralded Texas Rangers pitcher named R. A. Dickey, who lacks an ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow. Dickey, seemingly an unwitting descendant of Toad Ramsey, throws a specialty knuckle-gripped pitch that he calls "the Thing," which Boston's general manager, Theo Epstein, described to me as "one-third knuckleball, one-third breaking ball, one-third split-finger."

More than once, while I was in Fort Myers, I heard a rumor that the Yankees' owner, George Steinbrenner, fed up with watching his high-priced stars flail helplessly at Wakefield's flittering moths, had ordered his legions to produce a knuckleballer of their own.

In the meantime, the Red Sox are slowly approaching the day when Giambi's suggestion might not be so far-fetched. As of this writing, Zink is leading Portland in innings pitched, and in the last week of April the Sox signed the left-handed pitcher Joe Rogers from the discard heap—forgettable news, if not for the fact that Epstein had told me that the club planned to convert him immediately to the Zink regimen. Rogers, who is twenty-three, was relieved of his fastball-throwing duties with the St. Louis Cardinals organization at the end of spring training, and he has now been assigned to Boston's Sarasota affiliate, where, throwing mostly knuckleballs, he allowed just one earned run in his first seven innings of work. "We're trying to remind ourselves that there are lots of ways to get guys out," Epstein said. ♦

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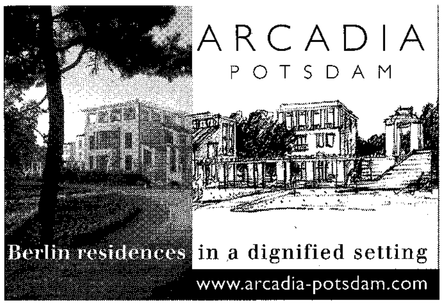

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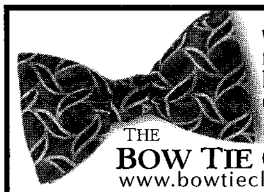

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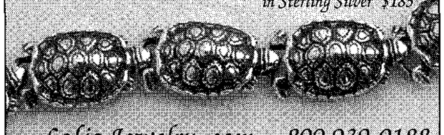

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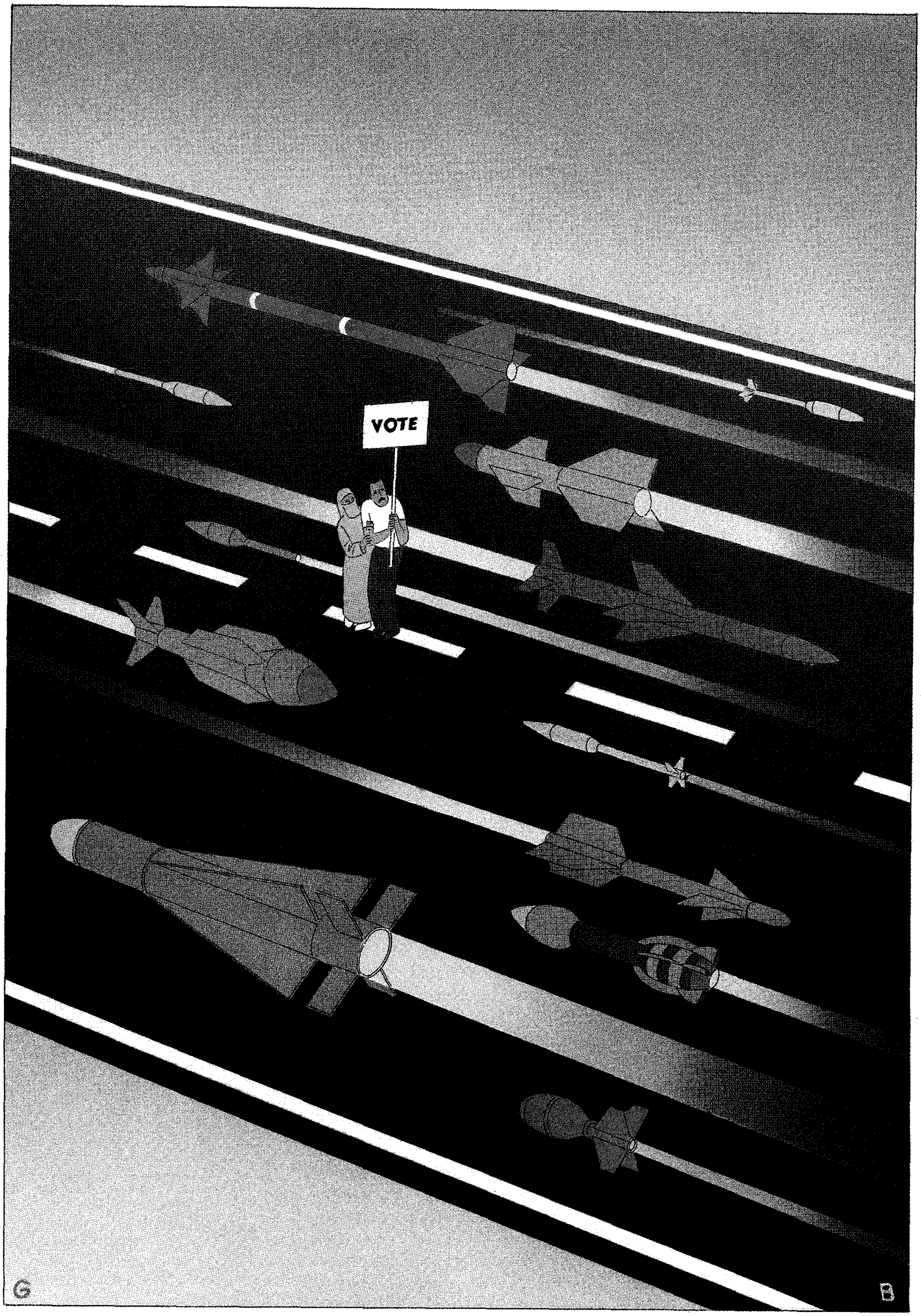
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LETTER FROM BAGHDAD

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

Will moderate Iraqis embrace democracy—or Islamist radicalism?

BY GEORGE PACKER

On the March morning I visited the Baghdad morgue, which is in a decaying neighborhood near the Tigris River, a young forensic-medicine specialist named Dr. Bashir Shaker was on duty. It was the day after Ashura, one of the most important religious holidays on the Shiite calendar, which commemorates the murder of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, and the massacre of his followers at Karbala, in 680 A.D. Thirteen hundred and twenty-four years later, Baghdad was festooned with the symbols of Shiite piety and penitence: the red flags of Hussein's blood, the green flags of Islam, the black flags of grief bearing messages such as "Hussein Taught Us to Become Victims in Order to Gain Victory." For the first time in decades, Iraqi Shiites felt free to observe the day of martyrdom and the forty days of full-throated mourning that follow. The chants, the parades, the beating of chests, and the flaying of backs in ceremonies of atonement also became displays of collective power.

The shrines of Baghdad and Karbala were therefore unusually crowded with black-clad Shiite pilgrims that day—and when suicide bombers in their midst detonated a series of explosions it was the worst civilian massacre since the start of the war. The death toll in the two cities was at least a hundred and eighty, and the Baghdad morgue became a charnel house filled with bodies, heads, limbs, and buckets of flesh. Outside the morgue, a man waited to enter and look for the corpse of an eleven-year-old boy, a neighbor, whose father lay wounded in the hospital. Others were leaving with rags still pressed to their faces, a response to the stench inside. The authorities were rushing to complete the process of identification. There would be no forensic autopsies of the victims, Shaker told me; these followers of Hussein were Shiite martyrs, and Islam forbade the violation of their bodies.

Before the American invasion of Iraq, Dr. Shaker said, only one murder victim arrived at the city morgue each month. This statistic underscores two conditions of Iraqi life under Saddam Hussein: the state had a near-monopoly on killing, and most of the victims of the state disappeared into unmarked mass graves. One unintended effect of Iraq's liberation from Baathist tyranny has been the widespread dispersal of violence. In occupied Iraq, between fifteen and twenty-five murder victims arrive at the Baghdad morgue daily, most of them with gunshot wounds. Shaker estimated that five cases a week involve Baathists executed in reprisal killings; their families typically retrieve the bodies without informing the police. With barely functioning courts, a weak, ill-trained, and often corrupt new police force, a foreign occupier that has failed to provide security, and a pervasive atmosphere of lawlessness, Iraqis don't expect the justice that was denied them during the reign of Saddam Hussein to materialize anytime soon.

The day I visited, Shaker said that he was reviewing "an interesting case," unrelated to the Ashura bombings. The body of a woman, forty-one years old and never married, had recently been discovered with six gunshot wounds in the chest. Shaker's initial examination had found that the woman appeared not to be a virgin, and the number of gunshots suggested that the murder was premeditated. These details cast suspicion on her family: Shaker said that such a crime was called "washing the shame." Honor killing is an old custom in Iraq, he said, though in this case there was a new element: before the war, the family would have burned or drowned the woman to disguise the murder. "Now you can kill and go," Shaker said. "No need to cover the crime." The standard sentence for "washing the shame" is six months.

The woman's case was referred to a committee of five doctors, including Iraq's leading hymen expert. To Shaker's surprise, the committee found that the woman's hymen was extremely thin but intact. Case closed: the family would not be investigated, and, without the means to find other clues, the police would seal the woman's file.

Down the hall from the morgue, which is in a squat, two-story yellow building called the Medico-Legal Institute, is an examination room with a reclining chair and stirrups. This is where virginity exams on living subjects take place—most of them on suspected prostitutes, but also on runaways, kidnapping victims, and girls who have suffered an accident and whose parents, for the sake of marriageability, want a medical certificate establishing their purity.

An entire subspecialty of forensic medicine in Iraq deals with virginity, Shaker said. In any criminal case involving a woman, it's the most important piece of information. "It rules our life," he added. The surprising thing about these details of his profession is their ordinariness. In the West, Iraqis developed a reputation for cosmopolitan modernity that is now decades out of date. In order to win the support of Iraq's clerics, Saddam obliged people to adopt a harsh form of traditional Islam. In private matters of religion, family, and the treatment of women, the vast majority of Iraqis are far more conservative than most outsiders understand.

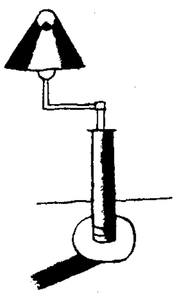
In March, 2003, a week before the start of the war, a sixteen-year-old girl whom the Baathist police had found wandering disoriented through the streets was brought to the Medico-Legal Institute. Upon examining her, Shaker found that her virginity had been recently and violently taken. The girl, named Raghda, was beautiful, with pale skin and large, dark

Iraqis had a reputation for cosmopolitan modernity, but most of the people are far more conservative than outsiders understand.

GUY BILLOUT

eyes, and she was so miserable she could hardly speak. Raghda seemed nothing like the teen-age prostitutes Shaker examined, and he gently persuaded her to tell him what had happened.

Raghda had gone to audition as a television announcer at the studio owned by Uday Hussein, Saddam's psychopathic older son. Along with the six other finalists, she was taken to a room where Uday—crippled from a 1996 assassination attempt—was seated in a chair, holding a pistol in his lap. He ordered the girls to undress and walk in a circle around his chair. When one girl begged to be excused, Uday shot her dead. After that, the other girls, including Raghda, did as they were told. In the following days, Uday (who was committing some of his last crimes in power, while an invasion force gathered along Iraq's southern border) raped the girls, then threw them out on the street, drugged, with a wad of cash, which was how Raghda was found by the police. When she told them her story, they gave her a beating and then took her to the Medico-Legal Institute.



"If you want to help me," Raghda told the doctor, "go tell my parents their daughter was found dead."

On March 18th, two days before the war started, Shaker completed Raghda's paperwork. "Notice that there is the appearance of complete hymen rupture from the top to the base," he wrote. "In conclusion, the hymen membrane was ruptured longer than two weeks ago; I cannot say how long. End of report." Raghda was returned to the police; Shaker never learned her fate.

Shaker served in the Iraqi Army and, a decade ago, took part in the occupation of Kuwait. Now he handles Baghdad's nightly traffic of violent death. One Friday brought thirty-two bodies, including two foreign engineers—one German, one Dutch—who had been gunned down by insurgents on a road south of Baghdad, and two Iraqi journalists shot to death by American soldiers as they drove away from a checkpoint. For Shaker, such cases are purely intellectual matters. He told me without emotion that his testimony in trials has sent homosexuals to execution. The effect of this dispassion shows in the cold, handsome gaze of his blue eyes; in his direct, uninflected manner of speaking; and in the way his smile turns almost automatically into a sneer. But he hadn't got over Raghda.

When I met him, Shaker said he was looking for a change in his life: "Any change, better or worse." He had a restless mind and hated boredom, and, since the Americans represented something new, he welcomed spending time with me. I assumed that this forward-thinking man of science—with a flat-top haircut and clean-shaven jaw—wanted a relatively secular, liberal Iraq. I kept waiting for him to catch my eye in the middle of one of his clinical descriptions and shake his head over the backwardness of a society obsessed with virginity and prostitution. It never happened.

Shaker was born in 1968, the year the Baath Party came to power. "For thirty-five years, I feel I was dead," he said. "Only these last weeks I'm beginning to live." The fall of Saddam and the arrival of foreign occupiers—who happened to be the makers of his favorite old movies—had, at last, brought the chance for a new life. Eager to obtain travel documents and venture outside Iraq, he sold his private dermatology practice and a piece of land he'd received as a former soldier. His first foreign trip was to Amman, Jordan, where he had arranged to meet an Iraqi girl who was living in exile in Amsterdam. They married after two days. "Like a movie," he said. His wife is still in Amsterdam, but the plan is for her to move to Baghdad, once the city returns to calm.

Though Shaker was initially grateful to the foreign occupiers, the disorder on Baghdad's streets disillusioned him. The morgue reflected that chaos—it had the improvised, filthy atmosphere of a front-line hospital. There were pools of blood on the floor, and empty stretchers attracted flies. In the hall, bodies lay uncovered on tables: a man with a broad mustache and a slashed throat, found naked under a pile of garbage in a middle-class district; a man with a gunshot wound in his head, his blue eyes open and filmy; the small, blackened corpse of a badly burned woman. Amid the gloomy chill of the refrigerated room, six other naked bodies lay sprawled on the floor, two women and four men. One of the women, believed to be a prostitute, had been shot through the nipple—by a relative, Shaker assumed.

These days, the morgue overflows, but the examination room down the hall is usually empty. Before the war, it was the other way around; Shaker used to perform five or six virginity exams a day. Shaker is a Shiite Muslim, and he was appalled by this inversion of the normal order. In his view, a fragile moral relationship existed between the two sections of the Medico-Legal Institute—as if the social control of virginity offered a defense against the anarchy that led to murder. He noted that in Iran, an Islamist theocracy, prostitutes were publicly whipped. He thought the same practice should be instituted in Iraq—where the sex trade, he claimed, had reached epidemic proportions in the lawlessness of the occupation. "It's strict, it's horrible, but it has good results," he said of Islamic law. "Prostitution now is normal here." He blamed the Americans for the moral laxity in Baghdad, and especially L. Paul Bremer, the administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority, for threatening, in February, to veto any interim constitution that declared Islam to be the principal basis of federal law. "When they give everybody their rights, it's causing bad things in society—it's corrupting us," Shaker said. "If Islam is the main source of law, none of these things would happen."

The doctor said that he belonged to "the middle level of mind" in Iraqi society, somewhere between the strictly religious masses and the secular élite. "There are many Iraqis like me," he said. In Iraq, there is nothing unusual about a doctor who loves Marilyn Monroe and Cary Grant, desires the public whipping of prostitutes, and believes that executed homosexuals got what they deserved. Yet Shaker's mix of traditional and modern views causes him considerable inner conflict. "I hate Iraq," he said. "And I love it." He longs to live abroad, but fears the moral climate outside the country. He is wary of the Western images that appear on his television screen, though he installed a satellite dish on his roof when it was illegal, and dangerous, to own one. He adores his new wife, an independent-minded woman who wears low-cut shirts, but he wants her to start covering her hair and acting like a traditional Muslim woman when she moves to Baghdad. His work fascinates him, but he is concerned that his daily immersion in death will make him less spiritual. "The doctor of forensic medicine deals only with bodies," he said. "So maybe in the end I will become like you—an existentialist."

Dr. Shaker lives with his mother and his brothers and sisters on a tidy side street in Al Thawra, the heavily Shiite slum district in northeastern Baghdad. Last year, the neighborhood was renamed Sadr City, in honor of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, a revered Shiite leader known for his subversive sermons against Baathist tyranny; he was assassinated in 1999, almost certainly on Saddam's orders. His son, Moqtada al-Sadr, declared himself his successor. With the overthrow of Saddam, Moqtada began stridently fomenting dissent against the American occupation. Throughout Sadr City, young men in black uniforms guided traffic: these were members of the Mahdi Army, Moqtada's militia.

A round sticker was affixed to the wooden front door of Shaker's house; it bore an image of Ayatollah Sadr, along with a quotation, from one of his sermons, insisting that women be veiled. In the Shakers' living room hung a picture of Imam Hussein crossing a river on horseback by moonlight, like one of the Christian saints. Compact disks containing forty-five sermons by Ayatollah Sadr were stacked inside the family's TV cabinet, alongside a pile of back issues of *Al Hawza*, the fiercely anti-American newspaper published by Moqtada al-Sadr. Shaker told me that he got his television news from Al Jazeera and Iranian broadcasts—he never watched Iraq's American-run network. His main source of information from the non-Islamic world, I realized, was old Hollywood movies. That wouldn't offer him much help in parsing the truth of a story I noticed in *Al Hawza*. The newspaper had reprinted photographs of President Bush and President Clinton holding up their index and pinkie fingers; the accompanying article offered the images as evidence of a Zionist-Masonic conspiracy.

Shaker's younger brothers, Ali and Samir, joined us in the living room. Ali was a secondary-school math teacher, Samir an unemployed telecom repairman. Unlike their dirty-blond, fair-skinned older brother, they were dark and bearded—respectful, serious, slightly wary.

"Samir is closer to God than me," Shaker said. "Ali is like me—flexible." Ali and Samir were devoted followers of Moqtada; they shared his hostility toward the occupation. From time to time, someone knocked on the door, and one of the brothers would get up to receive a tray of food or beverages from the hands of an unseen woman.

Ali brought up the Ashura bombings. "Ninety-five per cent of Iraqis knew the main purpose of this was to start a religious war between Shia and Sunnis," he said. He was skeptical of the Americans' assertion that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian terrorist with ties to Al Qaeda, was responsible for the attacks. "This Zarqawi—it's only a game that the Americans use," Ali declared. "Before the election of Bush, they'll show Zarqawi on TV. Just like Saddam—they captured him months before they showed him."

The brothers told me a joke about the occupation: An American soldier is about to kill a Shiite, who cries, "Please, no, in the name of Imam Hussein!" The American asks who Imam Hussein was, and then decides to spare the man's life. A few weeks later, this same soldier is sent to Falluja, where he is cornered by a Sunni insurgent. The soldier thinks fast and cries, "Please, no, in the name of Imam Hussein!" The insurgent says, "What? You're an American *and* a Shiite?," and blows him away.

There was a moment of laughter in the living room.

Ali sat cross-legged on a rug against the wall, and looked directly at me. "Before this war, I was waiting for the Americans to come—and now I feel sort of cheated. All this talk about rebuilding Iraq, and all we see is a couple of light coats of paint. And they say they renovated Iraq."

Samir, the unemployed younger brother, spoke in darker tones, with a faint smile. He had never had any illusions. "No enemy loves his enemy. We know very well that the Americans don't intend us any good."

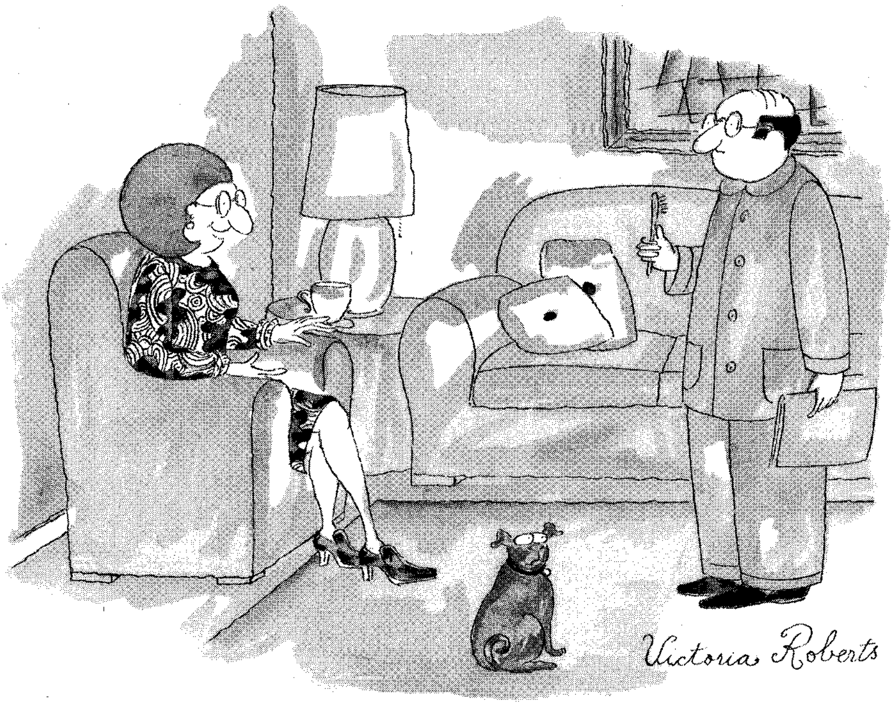
The Americans had at least got rid of Saddam, I observed. "That's not enough," Ali said. "Now things are worse. We can't go outside at four in the morning, as before."

If within a year there were free elections in Iraq, I asked, would they be satisfied?

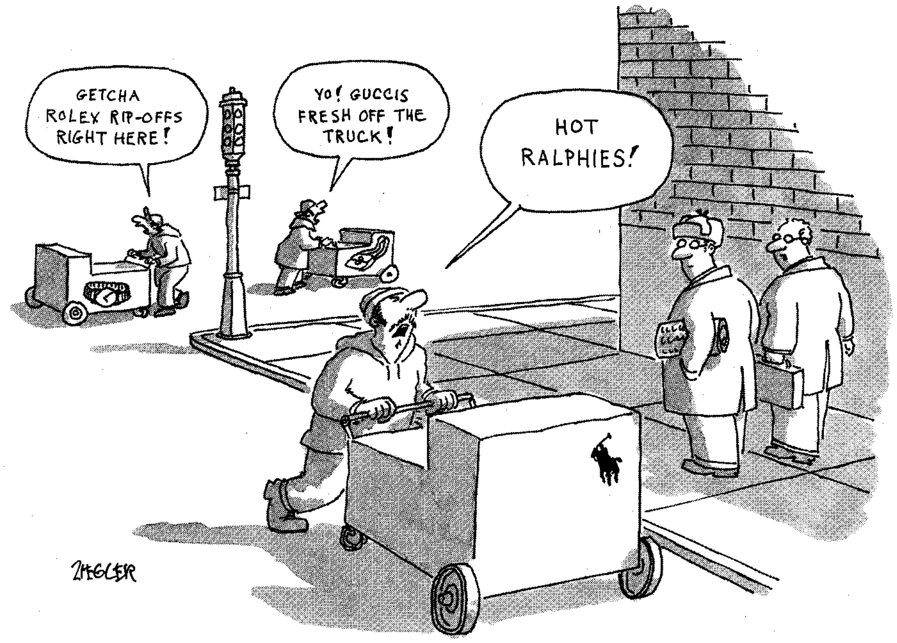
"Yes," Samir said.

Ali disagreed. "I don't think the people will be satisfied. So what if we have a President? The mobile phones we have here don't work. Why can't it be like the Gulf countries? Maybe in generations after generations. But we won't be here then. It pisses me off."

Shaker also spoke of the urgent need for improved services. Then he asked to



"Early curtain?"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"The big money doesn't seem to be in pretzels anymore."

borrow my satellite phone and disappeared up on the roof, to call his new wife in Amsterdam.

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One Friday not long after the Ashura bombings, I went with Shaker to hear prayers in Kadhimiya, an old Shiite neighborhood in the northwestern part of Baghdad that is famous for its gold shops. One of the bombs killed nearly sixty people at the local shrine, which holds the remains of two imams who came after the martyred Hussein. Along a broad pedestrian market street that ends in the square in front of the sixteenth-century mosque, cordons of grim-looking young Mahdi Army militiamen, carrying Kalashnikovs, searched the throngs of pilgrims for weapons.

There were no Iraqi policemen or American soldiers on the streets. One Mahdi soldier, who was eighteen years old, said that the Americans had prevented Moqtada's militia from carrying their weapons on Ashura. This was a foolish decision, he said: if the militia had been armed, it would have been able to hold back the surges of worshippers and catch the suicide bombers mingling in the crowd.

While Shaker went into a shop to wash himself before prayers, a local cleric named Sheikh Muhammad Kinani told me that the bombers were Wahhabi members of Al Qaeda, working in concert with an American soldier employed by the John Kerry campaign. "I believe John Kerry is behind this so Bush will lose his Presidency and look bad in front of the world," he said. "But it's the Iraqis who pay for it."

Such rumors proliferate on the streets of Iraq's cities these days. In fact, the traffic in conspiracy theories is so heavy that an American intelligence unit began putting out "The Baghdad Mosquito," a daily compendium of rumors currently in circulation. According to several Shiites I spoke with in Kadhimiya, Wahhabi men all have light-colored beards and are the enemies of true Muslims. A merchant on the pedestrian market street said, "We caught a Wahhabi from Ramadi an hour ago." The captive, he said, was wearing a short dishdasha, in the Wahhabi style; although his feet were dirty, his body was suspiciously clean. A search of the Wahhabi man turned up blank paper and a map. Local people took him to the police station, where he would be tortured until he confessed.

Prayers began beneath a hot noon sun. The shrine itself, with its splendid golden domes and minarets, was closed because of bomb damage. Men filled the square; holding black signs and pictures of Shiite martyrs, and shaking their fists, they chanted, "Pray to Muhammad and the followers of Muhammad and hurry the damning of our enemies. Give victory to Moqtada! We follow Moq-ta-da!" Shaker knelt in the front row and prayed. He seemed alone in the crowd, the only worshipper who wasn't chanting.

One of Moqtada's aides, Hazem al-Araji, delivered the sermon. He is a thirty-five-year-old sayyid with a salt-and-pepper beard who spent two years in exile in Vancouver before the war. Later, in a conversation at his office, he proved to be a smooth, smiling politician who Googles himself several times a day to keep up with his press, and who made a theocratic Islamic state sound not very different from a parliamentary democracy. But, in front of the crowd of worshippers outside the shrine, Araji let loose an incendiary and conspiracy-laced analysis of the violence in Iraq. The attacks came from four sources, he declared, none of them Iraqi or Muslim: it was the Jews, the Americans, the British, and the Wahhabi. The Jews—who had been warned to stay away from the World Trade Center on September 11th, so that not one Jew died—"want Iraqis to die." America, the devil, allows the violence in order to have an excuse to continue occupying Iraq. The British, America's partners, are more directly responsible, since they invented Wahhabism and, therefore, Al Qaeda, which have "nothing to do with Islam."

Shaker knelt, slump-shouldered, and gazed down at his clasped hands, muttering prayers. He looked puzzled, as if he were trying to figure something out. I wondered if the cleric's ranting embarrassed him.

"If you read the modern books of history," Araji proclaimed, "you know that Wahhabism started in 1870 by the good graces of the British government in order to go against Islam, to make Islam look bad, to make Muslims fight each other. Those who know—good. Those who don't—know now."

Araji was referring to "Confessions of a British Spy," an apocryphal memoir attributed to a British colonial officer of the early eighteenth century named Hempher. (Araji was off by a hundred and fifty years.) Going undercover, Hempher befriends a gullible, hotheaded Iraqi in Basra named Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and tempts him into founding a heretical sect of Islam that will bring disrepute to other Muslims and turn them against one another: "We, the English people, have to make mischief and arouse schism in all our colonies in order that we may live in welfare and luxury." Hempher cannot conceal his admiration for the spiritual grandeur of Islam, which more than once nearly causes him to abandon his mission. "Confessions of a British Spy" reads like an Anglophobic variation on "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion"; it is probably the labor of a Sunni Muslim author whose intent is to present Muslims as both too holy and too weak to organize anything as destructive as Wahhabism (or, Araji's listeners could deduce, to pull off a crime as appalling as the Ashura bombings, which took place two centuries after Wahhabis, on the same holiday, sacked the Shiite shrine at Karbala, slaughtering two thousand citizens). With its subtext of powerlessness, the "memoir" is ultimately a confession of Muslim humiliation—a text that was bound to find an audience in occupied Iraq, where the name Hempher has begun to circulate among militant Shiites.

"America, England, Israel, do whatever you have to do, build more missiles, more explosives, more terrorism all over the world," Araji said. "But it's not going to stop us."

The crowd chanted, "Yes, yes to Islam!"

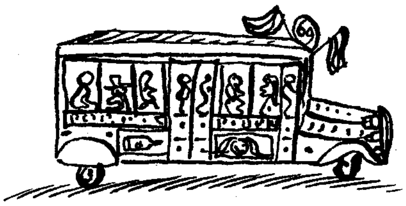
"Just a speech," Shaker scoffed as we drove out of Kadhimiya. "If I knew this man is going to deliver the Friday prayers, I would not go." He would have preferred to hear Moqtada himself. If Moqtada had come, he said, there would have been less talk and more action.

It is one measure of America's inability to achieve its goals in Iraq that a man of "the middle level of mind" like Bashir Shaker—who had everything to gain from the overthrow of Saddam and the opportunities it opened up—feels himself pulled toward a harsher brand of Islam in reaction to the pervasive insecurity of the occupation. Many flaws of the occupation have by now been exhaustively documented: the lack of significant international support at the outset; the catastrophic looting that followed the fall of Baghdad; the commitment of a grossly insufficient number of American troops to provide security, rebuild infrastructure, and fight a widening insurgency; the decisions to abolish the Iraqi Army and purge higher-level Baathists from government jobs, which turned several hundred thousand mostly Sunni Arabs, who might have become partners, into jobless, well-armed, and well-funded potential enemies; the slipshod planning in Washington and political mistakes in Baghdad that have forced the occupation authority to toss out one road map for Iraq's future after another.

Yet perhaps the greatest mistake made by the architects of the war was to assume that their vision of a liberal state would be eagerly embraced by an ethnically divided, overwhelmingly Islamic country with a long history of dictatorship. The Coalition Provisional Authority managed the occupation as if benevolent American intentions guaranteed success. Giving Iraqis a chance to experience and participate in democracy became less important than achieving a desired outcome. As a result, Paul Bremer and his colleagues failed to anticipate the level of resistance that would emanate from Iraq's various factions—in particular, the Shia.

The C.P.A. has been consistently slow to respond to the simmering frustrations of ordinary Iraqis. Since conditions in Iraq were already unravelling when Bremer arrived, last May, his primary focus has been on establishing his authority. "One thing that the C.P.A. couldn't make a mistake about was showing that it was in control," Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the British envoy to Iraq, told me at the end of March, just before returning to London. "This place has to be controlled, and I think this is an area where Bremer has got it exactly right, has shown that he's boss. The Iraqis wanted a boss." But, Greenstock admitted, "we could have been more consultative."

Larry Diamond, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, who served as a C.P.A. adviser on democracy, put it more bluntly: "There has always been a tension in our occupation between control and legitimacy. And the more we've sought control, the less legitimacy we've had. I think we have erred in general, from the start, much too heavily in the direction of control at the expense of legitimacy, and that has come back to haunt us."



This is a dilemma that Bremer has never been able to resolve. In January and February, he oversaw the drafting of an interim Iraqi constitution by the Governing Council, the Iraqi body appointed by the Coalition. If Bremer had encouraged widespread public discussion of the emerging document's main points, in order to make educated participants of Iraqis, he would have risked seeing the inevitable controversies fought out in the streets. Instead, the interim constitution was written under tremendous time pressure, in small, secretive committee meetings during all-night negotiating sessions inside the Green Zone, the impenetrable fortified area in the center of Baghdad. The signing ceremony, on March 5th, was elaborately planned for the cameras: twenty-five pens were laid out on a table, one for each council member, and a chamber ensemble provided music. At the last minute, however, five Shiite members who had agreed to sign the document ruined Bremer's script by failing to show up.

Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's most respected Shiite cleric, had belatedly expressed his opposition to Article 61c of the interim constitution. The article, which soon became notorious, essentially gave Iraq's minority Kurds and Sunnis veto power over any element of the permanent constitution. For the Kurds, who were long oppressed by Iraq's central government, Article 61c was a guarantee of minority rights in a federal republic. In January, Bremer had sent a young and inexperienced team of advisers to negotiate with the senior Kurdish leaders, who refused to back off heavy demands. Even after Bremer personally intervened, the Kurds got almost everything they wanted, including an autonomous region in the north. To the Shiite religious leadership, which apparently learned of the article's language only at the last hour, the same Article 61c appeared to stand in the way of majority rule.

On March 8th, after three days of persuasion, the five Shiite holdouts on the council signed the document. The interim constitution is a real achievement—the only one the Governing Council can claim. It represents political compromise and a broad consensus about individual rights. During the final day and night of negotiations, Bremer yielded control—a rare moment for an official who has been described as a micromanager—and for eight hours became a silent observer, allowing the Iraqis to work out the unavoidable conflicts between majority rule and minority rights. But, because the C.P.A. and the council had failed to build any support for the interim constitution outside the Green Zone, its unveiling inspired street demonstrations, mass confusion over its contents, and a sharp increase in tension between the Shia and the Kurds. At a meeting of the district council in Baghdad's Karrada neighborhood, I listened to Governing Council representatives patiently explaining the interim constitution to a roomful of increasingly agitated citizens who, confronted with a fait accompli, accused the council of dismembering the country.

Even as it became clear that the key article risked undermining the entire document's legitimacy in the eyes of Iraq's majority, Bremer refused to consider any changes. An official involved in the process said that Bremer wanted the interim constitution to be sold to the Iraqi public in a one-way conversation: "He has a tremendous investment in this as one of his prized accomplishments."

Other than the June 30th deadline for the transfer of sovereignty, the interim constitution is just about all that remains of the November 15th agreement between the C.P.A. and the Governing Council—the agreement that outlined Iraq's political future, replacing Bremer's original plan. Throughout the year of its existence, the C.P.A. has seen its blueprints overrun by events beyond the Green Zone that were to some degree predictable—and were caused partly by its own deep isolation.

One crucial example has been the fate of Moqtada al-Sadr. Last summer, Hume Horan, the C.P.A.'s senior liaison to the Shia religious community, spoke with me about the dilemma posed by Moqtada. On the day after the fall of Baghdad, an American-backed liberal cleric, Abdel Majid al-Khoei, was killed by a mob of Moqtada's followers outside the shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf. (Eyewitnesses have said that Moqtada himself refused to save his rival when Khoei was dragged bleeding to his door.) The murder was a power grab by Iraq's most radical Shiite faction. Later, *Al Hawza,* Moqtada's newspaper, published a blacklist with the names of Iraqi "collaborators," at least one of whom was subsequently killed. As a result, Horan told me, Moqtada's paper could be shut down and he could be arrested. Then again, putting Moqtada in jail might make him a martyr and, therefore, more dangerous.

During our conversation, Horan sounded as if he were inclined to let the establishment Shiite clerics of Najaf deal with the demagogic young upstart who had planted himself in their midst. "His father would be so distressed if he'd seen his son," Horan said of Moqtada. "Here's this unchurched son of one of the great churchmen, who fills the role without any of the qualifications. What is he lashing out at? Is it his own sense of inadequacy that is being projected?"

Last August, an Iraqi judge issued a warrant charging Moqtada with having ordered the killing of Khoei, but the C.P.A. kept the warrant a secret while it deliberated. One Coalition official said that the C.P.A. prepared to seize Moqtada on two occasions. "The word was 'Lock your doors, bring everybody in. We're going to snatch Moqtada,' " he said. Both operations were abruptly called off. "The decisions had to have occurred somewhere up the Defense Department chain," the official said. (A C.P.A. spokesman said that its plans to capture Moqtada were not that definitive.)

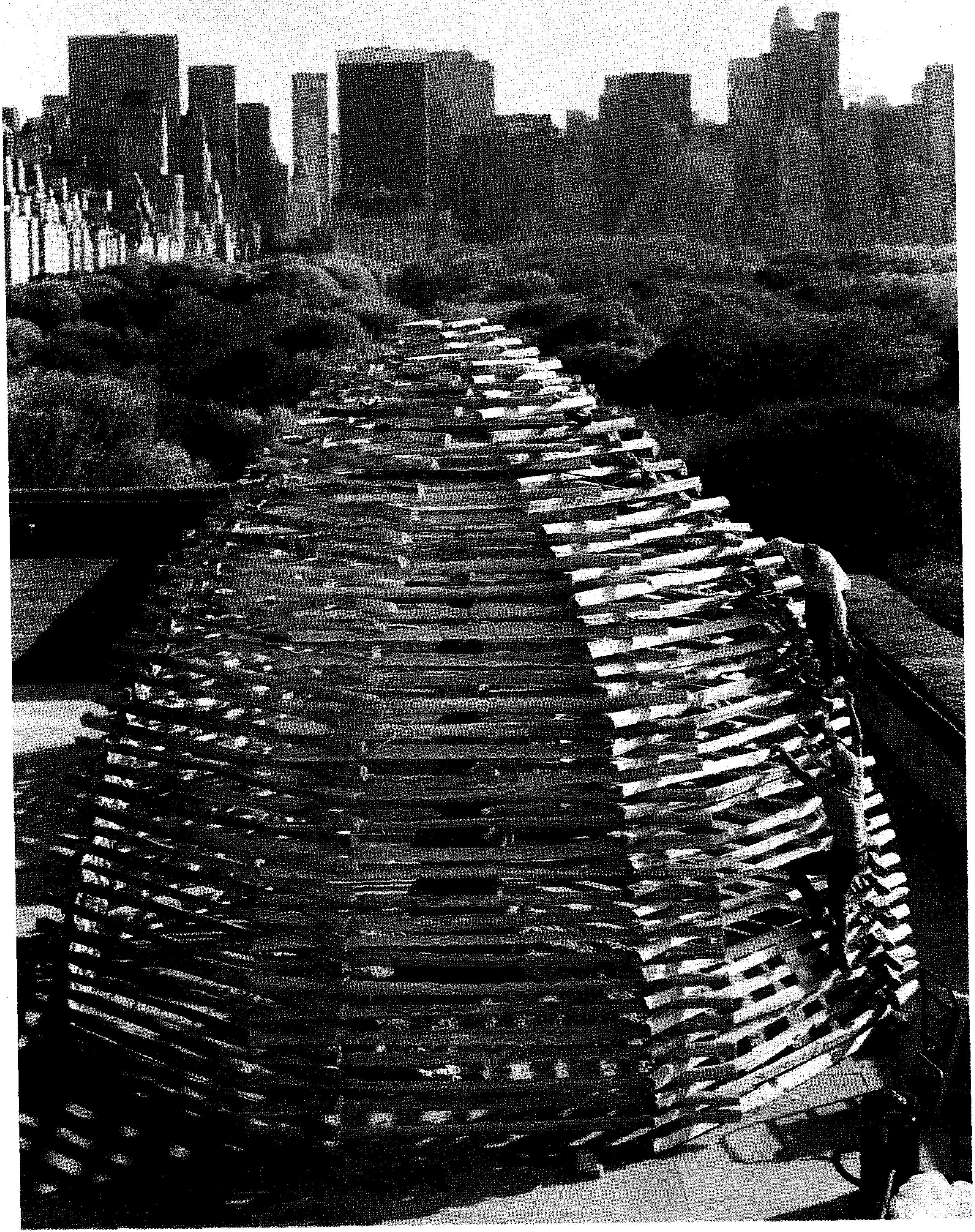
During this same period, the C.P.A. found itself in a series of protracted battles with Ayatollah Sistani, the Shiite leader. The first was over Bremer's decision to have the permanent constitution written by unelected Iraqis. That plan was finally scrapped, in favor of the November 15th agreement, which put the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty ahead of elections and a constitution. Then another dispute arose: Sistani objected to the C.P.A.'s proposal to hold regional caucuses for the selection of Iraq's interim government. Months went by before Bremer, having steadily misjudged Sistani's power, threw out the plan.

While the C.P.A. and Sistani took each other's measure in private, there was no political progress in Iraq. The local and provincial councils set up by the C.P.A.—which should have been seedbeds of Iraq's future leadership, offering the best hope for the emergence of moderate indigenous alternatives to the sectarian parties, with their armed militias and foreign backers—never received the means to exercise real power and show their constituents concrete results. For months, members went unpaid; I was told that a draft of the government order delineating the councils' powers was prepared in October—but it wasn't issued until April 6th. The councils' reconstruction efforts were constantly hindered by bureaucratic clots that kept money from flowing to local military commanders and civil authorities.

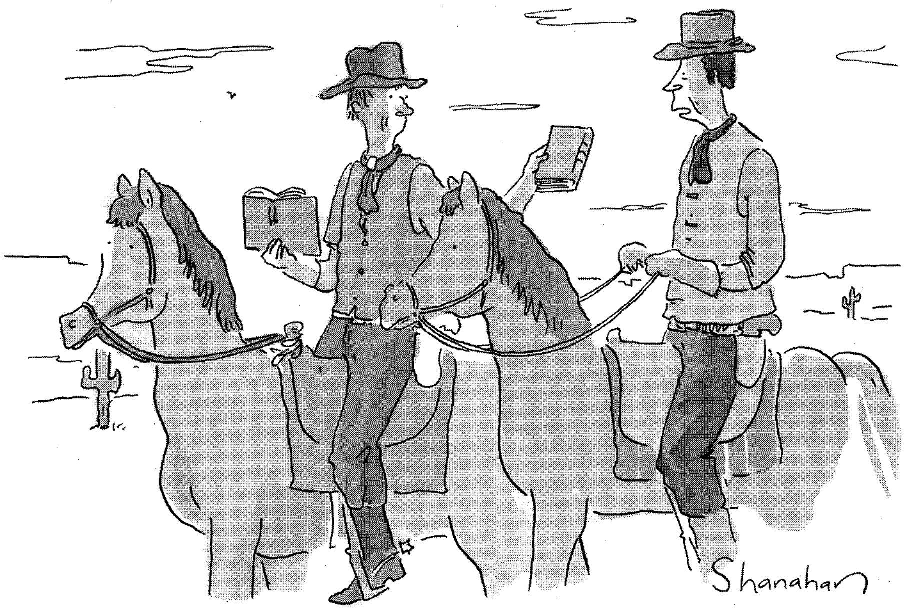
The absence of healthier politics created a dangerous vacuum, which was filled by the most extreme tendencies in Iraq: the Sunni resistance, made up of Baathist, Islamist, and nationalist elements; and the Shiite street politics of Moqtada al-Sadr. Sistani and Moqtada are natural foes, for personal and ideological reasons, and Sistani, because of his immensely greater religious authority, commands a much larger following among Iraqi Shiites. But after Sistani declared his opposition to the interim constitution the balance of power shifted. "As long as the Coalition had Sistani's tacit support, it didn't need to worry too much about Moqtada al-Sadr," Amatzia Baram, an Iraq scholar at the U.S. Institute of Peace, in Washington, told me. "But when Sistani announced his objection to the interim constitution the Coalition lost him." Article 61c placed Sistani, who was born in Iran, in a terrible position: he couldn't seem to be selling out Arab interests to the Kurds, nor could he afford to give Shiite radicals the chance to accuse him of selling out Islam. "That was a watershed moment," Baram said. "Because, from now on, every crazy Shiite could claim that he was fighting the Americans in Sistani's name. The moment radicals could present themselves as fighting for Sistani's causes, that united the Shia community against the Americans and the Governing Council. They were using Sistani's slogans against Sistani. Sistani became marginalized in his own name."

Moqtada's amplified significance was lost on Coalition officials. In late March, I asked Greenstock about the size of his following. "Tiny—and with no political impact," he said. "Go around Sadr City again now and you will find fewer Moqtada al-Sadr followers than you would have done five months ago." He added, "We thought he had an opportunity to bubble up and grow—he hasn't done it. Partly because he knows that if he moves anywhere he'll be picked up."

A week later, on March 28th, Bremer



ROOM WITH A VIEW *Andy Goldsworthy, with an assistant, installs "Stone Houses" at the Met. Photograph by Jens Umbach.*



"No, thanks, Tex—it makes me queasy just watching you."

ordered the closing of *Al Hawza;* within days, American soldiers had arrested an aide to Moqtada. Urged on by Moqtada's vitriolic speeches, the Mahdi Army responded with demonstrations that quickly escalated into armed confrontations with Coalition troops in Baghdad and a number of southern cities, several of which fell under the militia's control. The uprising seriously damaged the C.P.A.'s authority and undermined the occupation's legitimacy in the eyes of many Shiites who otherwise have no love for the erratic Moqtada and his violent followers. In early May, after a month of fighting, the Americans acted to end the uprising, confronting the Mahdi Army in Najaf and Karbala.

The timing of the C.P.A.'s move against *Al Hawza* was baffling, coming in the middle of the mourning period that follows Ashura. A senior official in Washington suggested to me that the Administration had been caught off guard: "Was there a series of decisions that seemed idiotic to those of us back here? Yes. Is one of them that, during a major Muslim holiday, Moqtada al-Sadr is suddenly a persona non grata? Yes." Worse, the C.P.A. seemed not to have prepared for the reaction from Moqtada's militia, betraying a serious miscalculation of the young cleric's strength. The Mahdi Army had been acquiring money and guns since last summer, and continued to intimidate townspeople in Najaf and elsewhere; at one point in January, militiamen occupied the shrine of Imam Ali.

Amatzia Baram faulted Bremer for the clumsy manner of the March crackdown on Moqtada, but not for the effort itself. As with so many other C.P.A. decisions, he said, "You're damned if you do and damned if you don't. That's the main problem in Iraq these days."

Moqtada's newfound power was in part a result of the failed communications effort by the C.P.A. Its Iraqi Media Network has been ineptly run, featuring vapid programming and Coalition-friendly news briefs. The Pentagon, which is in charge of the occupation of Iraq, kept tight control over the flow of news for domestic political reasons. It was a self-defeating effort, however: American propaganda was no match for Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya—and Moqtada's newspaper.

The C.P.A., having sacrificed legitimacy for control, has ended up with neither. A former Coalition official traced the failures in Baghdad directly back to Washington, and he identified the central irony of the occupation: "A lot of this is the unwillingness of the Bush Administration to rock the boat before the election. And it's laughable that it's pursued this policy. Because of the failure to confront Moqtada, because of the failure to disarm the militias, because of the lack of troops on the ground, Bush may well lose the election."

In March, during the standoff over the interim constitution, I went to see Mahmoud Othman, an independent Kurd on the Governing Council. A small man with a large nose and an unblinking stare, Othman was for many years the personal doctor of Mustafa Barzani, the leader of the Kurdish peshmerga guerrillas who fought the Iraqi central government. Before the American invasion, Othman was living in London, and, like most Kurdish politicians, he shares the Americans' vision of a relatively secular and liberal Iraq. But, much to the annoyance of the C.P.A., he has proved to be the Governing Council's in-house critic. When most of its other members were jockeying to perpetuate their positions beyond the June 30th transfer of sovereignty, Othman was calling flatly for the council to be dissolved, saying that it hadn't worked. He placed the blame for the debacle over Article 61c squarely on Bremer—who, Othman claimed, had coddled the council's Shiite bloc early on, encouraging its members to become intransigent. "It's a humiliation to him," he told me, with faint satisfaction. "He gave them that leverage, coming and going, and it was very bad."

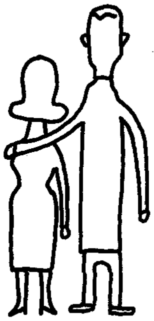
I asked Othman if the occupation was a failure. "It's not a success, either security-wise or media-wise or economic-wise," he said. "But I can't say it's a failure." He believed that most Iraqis still hoped for a decent life and a better society. In fact, Othman declared, going further than most observers would, "if things are set right, I think liberalism and secularism have the majority in this country always. But are the people now free to express their points of view? They are not. Because the country now is ruled by militias, mullahs, and warlords. The simple citizen is not allowed to have his own rights, to say freely what he wants." In one way, he added, the Americans were like Saddam: "They are not caring much for a simple Iraqi citizen. They care for a chief of a tribe here, a mullah there, a religious man here, a militiaman here, head of a party there."

As the June 30th deadline approaches, with no Iraqi interim government in sight, the United States has turned reluctantly to the United Nations. Until recently, Washington consistently prevented the U.N. from establishing any real authority in Iraq (the words "United Nations" appear nowhere in the November 15th agreement). But the Administration now finds that the C.P.A. and the Governing Council have so little legitimacy in the eyes of most Iraqis—including Ayatollah Sistani—that the transfer of sovereignty can't occur without outside help. Enter Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N.'s envoy to Iraq, and an Algerian diplomat who was Secretary-General Kofi Annan's representative in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban. In April, Brahimi and his team travelled to Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra to meet with groups of Iraqis and begin preparations for an interim government. The senior Administration official told me, "Brahimi has identified—unlike the ivory-tower C.P.A.—a lot of passionate, talented Iraqis who want the same things we want: freedom, democracy, liberty."

Fairly quickly, Brahimi concluded that the Governing Council should not be part of the new Iraqi government. "The Governing Council in its current constitution doesn't have the confidence of most Iraqis," his spokesman, Ahmed Fawzi, told me. At the end of April, Brahimi briefed the U.N. Security Council, in New York; he called for a caretaker government of technocrats, whose main purpose will be to prepare the country for elections by January, 2005. "We are reaching out to the professional associations, the trade unions, the universities, and asking them to give us the best of their crop," Fawzi said. "The best five lawyers, the best five doctors, the best five accountants, the best five engineers, to form a short list acceptable to all for a short-term interim government." A Prime Minister and a cabinet will be chosen by Brahimi, Bremer, and the Governing Council by the end of May. It seems inevitable that some of Iraq's leading politicians, including members of the Governing Council, will end up with positions in the interim government, though this will surely be the subject of intense negotiations between rival factions. Brahimi, who oversaw Afghanistan's *loya jirga*, imagines Iraqis from all sectors of society gathering in a national conference soon after June 30th to choose an advisory body, or rump parliament. The conference could be the first chance for ordinary Iraqis to feel that they have a stake in the country's political future.

It's not clear that a U.S. Administration with a history of pronounced hostility to the U.N. will relinquish real authority in Iraq to it, even now. The senior official said, "There are people in this Administration who have led me to believe that the U.N. is a greater clear and present danger to the United States than any foreign enemy, including Osama bin Laden." Robert Blackwill, a director at the National Security Council, will be Washington's point man in the process; according to the senior official, Blackwill will keep the pressure on Bremer to accept Brahimi's recommendations. Will the U.N., for its part, having been so badly undermined by the Administration on Iraq, return in force now, when things are going so poorly? "Kofi's going to have a really hard time looking at this and saying, 'Do I want a piece of this?' " the senior official said.

Annan and Brahimi, perhaps sensing that the U.N. is being set up to take the fall for what is bound to be an unstable, tumultuous period before elections, have tried to lower expectations about the organization's role in Iraq. Brahimi cannot answer some of the most important questions about the transition—such as how extensive Iraqi sovereignty will be, and what the relationship will be between the interim government and the U.S. military. Ahmed Fawzi expressed the hope that a sovereign Iraqi government will take the steam out of the insurgency. In the meantime, another U.N. official told me, the security situation in Iraq is so perilous that "it's going to be very difficult for any full-scale engagement of the U.N. in Iraq for the next couple of months." He added, "We're expected to take the lead—and we're not the lead. We're helping to do what we can. But the political reality is that the Americans are the biggest player in Iraq, and they're going to be before and after June 30th."



The only good reason left for the invasion of Iraq, and for an ongoing war involving a hundred and thirty-five thousand American troops, is the creation of a decent Iraqi government. The National Democratic Institute is an organization funded largely by the U.S. government and affiliated with the Democratic Party; it operates with relative independence, under the direction of the National Endowment for Democracy. The institute's purpose is to find what Mahmoud Othman called "the simple citizens" in a place like Iraq, and help them to participate in democratic political life. This tends to be obscure, poorly funded work—but the Bush Administration wants to pour half a billion dollars into Iraq for "democracy-building" programs before the transfer of sovereignty and national elections. The effort is floundering, however, because the escalation of violence has made it hard to spend the money.

Early one morning in mid-March, I drove to Hilla, which is ninety minutes south of Baghdad, with a group of Iraqis and Americans working for N.D.I. We travelled in non-armored vehicles, without guards. In the back seat of one of the sedans, wearing a navy-blue suit, a salmon-colored tie, and glasses, was David Dettman, a pale, chain-smoking political consultant from Ohio. For many years, Dettman, who is thirty-three and has the nervous, self-deprecating sense of humor of a Jack Lemmon character, worked successfully as a campaign consultant in Washington. Then he ran for the Ohio state legislature as a Democrat, got creamed, and had an epiphany. "What got me charged up is that I really believed in the process," he told me. He decided to leave his job, and he became one of N.D.I.'s democratization missionaries, posted in Ukraine. To the dismay of his wife, his mother, and his boss, Dettman had come to Iraq for two weeks to train groups of aspiring political-party activists in Baghdad, Tikrit, and Hilla.

The workshop in Hilla took place in the city's former secret-police headquarters, which has become a human-rights center. Forty Iraqis—including a political-science professor and an unemployed sports instructor—had travelled at some risk to attend the class. They listened intently and took careful notes as Dettman stood before a flip chart and presented a ten-step program on message development and voter contact. Mayasa al-Naimy, an Iraqi staff member of N.D.I., gamely translated the exotic campaign terminology: "earned media," "communications strategy," "wedge and base issues." (Dettman had told me earlier, "Politics is the art of getting people to vote for you. It's applicable all over the world. If it wasn't, I wouldn't have a job.")

After two hours of discussion, an Iraqi raised his hand. "This shows me we're making a transition from dictatorship to democracy," he said. "That makes me feel good. But this is the question: Will the American Administration leave it to us? Or just throw someone on us? Will all these efforts be lost?"

Outside, in the distance, there was an explosion—mortar fire—and then a second, closer one, which was followed by gunfire. Dettman glanced out the window and grinned with alarm.

"Does that answer your question?" someone asked.

"I'm not the government," Dettman said. "I'm N.D.I. We have to eat lunch. Can we talk about this later?"

After lunch, Dettman returned to the question. "My opinion is if America invaded Iraq for nothing other than to have a friendly dictator, then all of the American and Iraqi lives that were lost will have been wasted," he said. "I supported the invasion because I'm in the democratization business. I don't know anything about W.M.D.—I don't know if anyone was telling the truth or not—but I do know the Iraqi people deserve freedom. I can't say the Americans won't do anything wrong, because they already have done many things wrong in this occupation. And I'm sorry. But there's a reason N.D.I. is here now, and there's a reason we didn't bring a tank. We're the least armed Americans in Hilla. We're here trusting your hospitality. Because democracy is good and right." He went on, "If this traumatic war was fought for anything other than that, I'm gonna be mad. Here's the problem: I can't do much. I'm just the arrogant American in a suit standing up in front of you. I haven't suffered as much as you have. Only you can build democracy here. But if I just thought America was going to steal the freedom we fought for I would have stayed home with my wife and had a lovely time."

"Aren't you having a lovely time here?" someone asked.

"I am having a lovely time. But I miss my wife."

It was a heartfelt speech, and it was received with scattered applause. Then a man sitting near me muttered to himself, "A British guy named Hempher laid plans decades ago for Presidents to take turns ruling Iraq."

The people in the room belonged to Shaker's "middle level of mind." They were neither mullahs nor militiamen, and some of the parties they belonged to counted no more than several hundred members. One of the participants was Jawdet al-Obeidi, a former Army officer from Hilla. He fled Iraq after taking part in the Shiite uprising in 1991, and ended up in Portland, Oregon. He started a small limousine company there, and last year he sold it and returned to Iraq, as a member of a militia aligned with the U.S. invasion force. Since then, Obeidi has poured a hundred and fifty thousand dollars of his savings into building a coalition of almost two hundred small political parties that can challenge the larger parties in parliamentary elections. (Already, there are some three hundred political parties in Iraq.) The coalition's platform combines a moderate Muslim agenda with Iraqi nationalism and a respect for individual rights—a deliberately mild mixture that seems designed to have broad support. Obeidi, a balding, middle-aged man with a salesman's cheerfulness, has received death threats, and his brother-in-law survived three bullets in the head.

Also at the meeting was a married couple from Mahawil, a village of dirt roads and salt marshes near Hilla: Emad Dawood, who worked in a shop selling construction materials, and his wife, Saad, who had received a business degree in Baghdad but was unable to find work, and was now raising their three children. She was one of only three women at the meeting; like the others, she wore a hijab.

Her husband explained to me, "We go everywhere together."

"Any educated couple would do this," Saad said.

"Of course, we have religion, and we go by the rules," Emad added. "The Islamic religion doesn't say women can't mix with other men, but everything has to do with limits."

Saad pointed out that Islam doesn't deny women the right to participate in politics: "They should have a role in everything."

In Hilla, the repression of the 1991 Shiite uprising was particularly brutal, and, last year, mass graves containing thousands of victims were uncovered on the periphery of the town. Saad and Emad had each lost a brother, and many friends. The couple had only the vaguest notion of what was in Iraq's new interim constitution, but they knew very well what it was like to live under Saddam. "It's like a hammer on your head every day," Emad said, "and then they take it away."

The Dawoods had once seen the Americans as heroic liberators, but the feeling was short-lived. According to Emad, as the occupation ground on, with constant power outages and rampant crime, ordinary unhappiness was turning into a kind of insanity. "Things are just getting worse here," Saad added. "Of course, if there was democracy things would change."

"But democracy needs a long period of time, because we've been living so long under Saddam," Emad said.

"Most people do not get the idea of democracy," Saad said. "Ask anybody about democracy, and you'd find most people would say, 'What am I going to do with democracy? Give me security first.' "

Emad told me, "I know a guy who shot two bullets at random. He said, 'Isn't this freedom?' "

As for Dettman's presentation, it clearly meant something to this couple that Americans had come to meet with them in Hilla. Dettman had given them a lot of helpful information, they felt. Their only complaint was that there was no exam at the end, to test how much they'd learned about democracy.

The failures of the occupation and the violence of the insurgency have stranded moderate Iraqis like those who attended the meeting in Hilla. Lakhdar Brahimi wants to bring such Iraqis onto the national political stage, but, considering the disproportionate power of groups represented on the Governing Council and backed by foreign states, the chances for success are poor. Marina Ottaway, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told me that, after the fall of dictatorships, "you always have a lot of political parties forming, and they never get anywhere." N.D.I., she concluded, is "bravely doing something that is completely futile."

Of course, electoral success isn't the

only measure of what organizations like N.D.I. are trying to do. In Hilla, it felt like an achievement simply to hold a discussion, amid gunfire, about democracy, in which there was a genuine give-and-take between Iraqis and foreigners. The fact that Hempher, the supposed British spy blamed for so much trouble in the Muslim world, was invoked at the Hilla workshop was a less hopeful sign. The Americans' mistakes in Iraq have been only part of the story of disappointment. Many Iraqis—damaged beyond imagining by the cruelty of Saddam's rule, and afflicted with outsized expectations and suspicions of America—have fallen back on aspects of their culture and faith that offer a blind resistance to the new world that has been thrown open before them. In the past year, Iraq has undergone not just a war but a revolution. It's no wonder that Iraqis have responded not only with hope but with confusion, rage, and despair; the wonder is that Americans expected anything else.

We left Hilla just before dark, and set out for Baghdad. An hour later, on a nearby road, three people—an American woman working with Iraqi women's groups, a C.P.A. press officer, and their Iraqi translator—were ambushed and shot to death by men wearing Iraqi police uniforms. It was the start of a wave of attacks on foreign civilians and the Iraqis who worked with them. The violence had still not subsided by early May, and most of the non-governmental groups and contractors working for democracy in Iraq had evacuated their foreign employees. Les Campbell, the Middle East director of N.D.I., recently told me that the organization's foreign staff was in Amman, Jordan, waiting for the violence to diminish before returning to Baghdad, where the Iraqi staff continues to work. Meanwhile, Campbell is talking with private security firms, and looking for the right armored car.

He has not lost his optimism altogether. "Even with all the problems in Iraq, there is already far more civil-society space and party organizing than in any other Arab country," he said. He described how N.D.I.'s Iraqi staff members, such as Mayasa al-Naimy, have begun to blossom intellectually. "Even in the midst of the killings, which are terrible, and even though the planning and administration continue to be a joke, something interesting is going on here," Campbell said. "It makes me sort of sick to think it might not work."

Three days after the trip to Hilla, I paid another visit to Dr. Shaker at his house in Sadr City. His brother Samir had just come back from a demonstration against the interim constitution, led by one of Moqtada al-Sadr's top aides, in Firdus Square, the same spot where Saddam's statue was pulled down a year ago. "The Kurds have more rights than the others," Samir said. "They can veto anything we decide, but we don't have the right to veto."

Ali had watched a Shiite politician on television who said that Arabs could refuse the Kurds' demands for federalism. "We don't know anything about the constitution," Ali said. "It was written, handed over to the Governing Council to sign, and then shown to the people, who never saw it before."

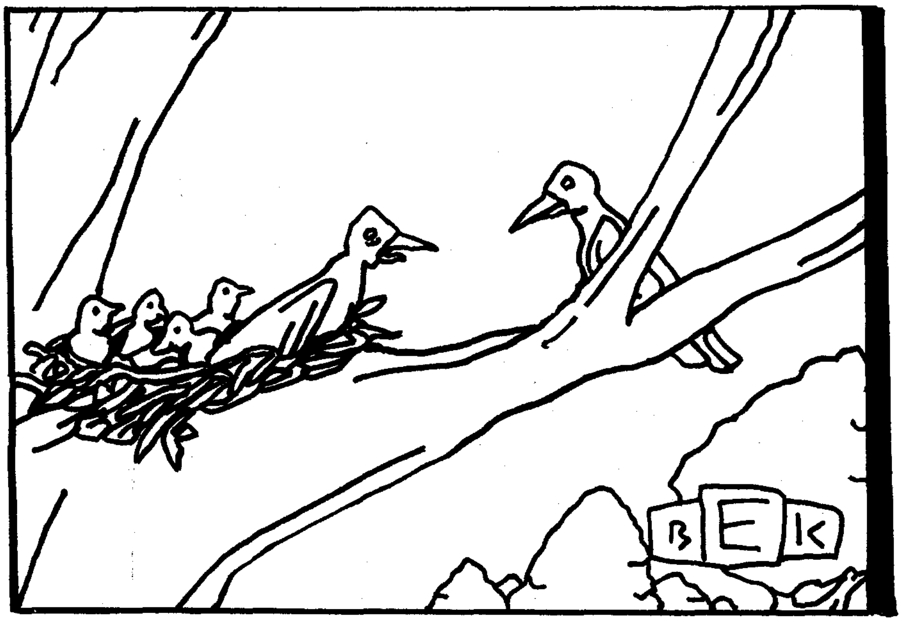
As for Shaker, the controversy filled him with foreboding. He doubted that Iraq would remain intact. The Shia, the Kurds, and the Sunnis had agendas that could never be reconciled. "The story will be like Lebanon," Shaker told me. "A civil war."

Arab against Kurd? "A strong possibility." Shiite against Sunni? "It's a possibility," he said. "The constitution will be the starting point, and then the event will be gradually increased." I asked if he envisioned rival armies fighting each other. "That is how I imagine it," he said. But, the likeliest scenario of all, he added, was a civil war among his own people, the Shia.

It was my last visit to the house. Afterward, neighbors belonging to Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army warned Shaker against having any more American visitors.

It was a few weeks later, on March 28th, that Moqtada's uprising began, and Sadr City exploded in days and nights of firefights between militiamen and American soldiers. I spoke with the doctor by phone. He had spent days trapped at home, unable to go to the morgue, while the uprising continued. Twelve of his friends in the neighborhood had died in crossfire. His brothers, Ali and Samir, wanted to join the Mahdi Army and fight the Americans, but he had stopped them. The scale of the violence shocked him, but not its outbreak, which he had seen coming. The bravery of the young militiamen, standing up to tanks with small arms, impressed him, and though he deplored their tactics, he sympathized with their goal—"real Islamic democracy."

Shaker said, "My idea of the situation now: the Americans are at the high level and Moqtada is down at the bottom, and they can't understand each other. They should be in the middle." He added, "The Americans have to use the political way. Bremer must be more diplomatic, more flexible. He needs to go through the middle level of mind—as I told you. He must speak to people like me." ♦



"Truthfully, I like them better before they're hatched."

ANNALS OF CRIME

THE SILVER THIEF

For one obsessive burglar, only sterling will do.

BY STEPHEN J. DUBNER

Sometime during the early hours of January 29, 2002, a great deal of sterling silver vanished from a mansion near Rhinebeck, New York. The mansion, known as Edgewater, was built in 1823 and for decades was the home of a family named Donaldson. Its current owner is Richard Jenrette, a retired financier whose hobby is preserving historic homes. Jenrette takes his hobby seriously. He once tracked down the last living Donaldson descendant, who had moved to the south of Spain, and persuaded her to repatriate the family's original silver to Edgewater. This included a flatware set decorated with the Donaldson crest (a raven perched on rocks) and a dozen teaspoons, each engraved with a sign of the zodiac (a bow to the Victorian interest in astrology, and a playful means of marking the seating arrangement). All of these items were stolen, as were a toddy ladle and a fish server, luncheon knives and demitasse spoons, a chocolate pot, and a six-piece tea set—many of which were designed by such fine silver makers as Tiffany, Gorham, and Martin-Guillaume Biennais.

The mansion also had Gilbert Stuart paintings and antique porcelain, but these had not been taken, and some of the lesser silver was left behind. Furthermore, the alarm had not been tripped. The burglar had gingerly pried the wooden molding from the glass panes of an exterior door, removed the glass, and shimmied inside, thereby failing to break the alarm contacts on the door. Jenrette, who was at his winter home in St. Croix when his caretaker phoned with the news, speculated that the burglar had some kind of inside connection, or had at least visited the mansion. Edgewater was occasionally open to tour groups, and Jenrette had recently held a fund-raising party for Hillary Clinton that drew several hundred people. He wondered if perhaps one of the guests—or, more likely, some guest's hard-up nephew or brother-in-law who had been told of the party—had broken into the grand, remote house along the Hudson River.

That night, there was another burglary, ten miles south of Edgewater, at Wilderstein, the former home of Daisy Suckley, who was a distant cousin and close companion of Franklin D. Roosevelt. (Suckley gave the President his famous Scottish terrier, Fala.) Again, the haul was silver, and the job was equally meticulous. The method of entry was the same. Wilderstein had an interior motion detector, which somehow had been evaded.

The state troopers in Rhinebeck realized that they were dealing with a specialist. The burglar left no fingerprints or clues. There wasn't much to do except alert the antiques publications, the auction houses, and the *Times*, which ran a brief article about the burglaries.

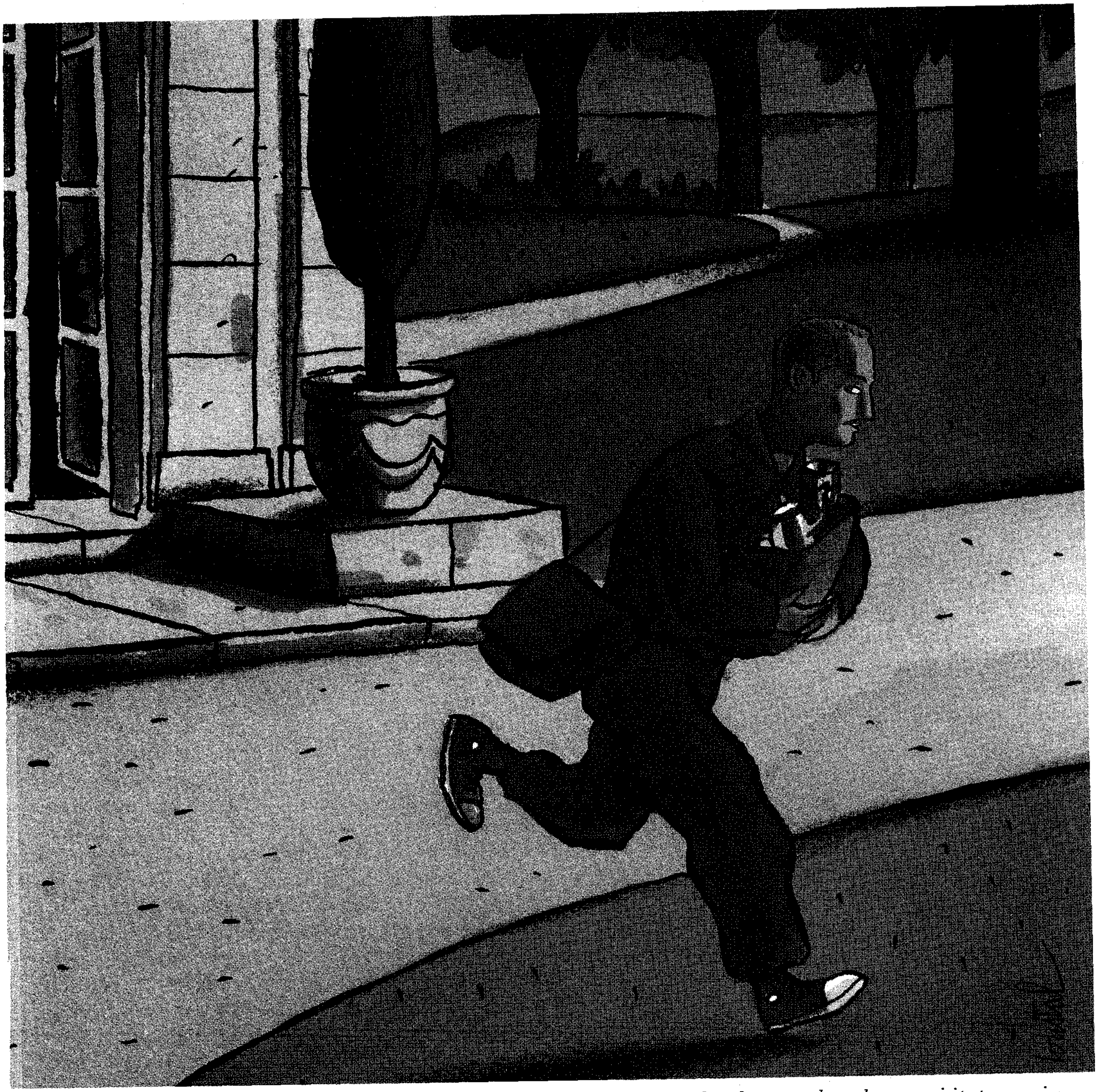
Nearly two weeks later, Cornell Abruzzini, a police detective in Greenwich, Connecticut, was having his morning coffee when a colleague stopped by with the *Times* article. "Doesn't this sound like the silver guy you nailed?" he asked. Abruzzini read the article, then called Rhinebeck and said, with barely an introduction, "I know the guy who's doing your burglaries."

Abruzzini told Tom Fort, the trooper who was handling the case, the name of the thief: Blane Nordahl. But Nordahl had in recent years used various aliases, which included David Price and Robert Demiani. Abruzzini advised Fort to check the local motels for all three names. On his tenth try, at a Super 8 several miles south of Rhinebeck, the trooper got lucky. A man called David Price had paid cash for a room. Miraculously, the clerk had done what motel clerks are supposed to do with a cash customer: taken down information on his car—a Cadillac Seville—and photocopied his driver's license. The picture on David Price's license was of Blane Nordahl. He had checked out more than a week earlier.

Blane Nordahl was patient. In Greenwich

JACQUES DE LOUSTAL

Several months ago, I drove out to Greenwich to talk with Cornell Abruzzini about Nordahl. Abruzzini is a well-spoken forty-five-year-old who pronounces his last name with brio, as if it were an exotic dessert. Trim, with deep-set eyes, he is bald on top but has dark hair on the sides and a thick beard, which has an auburn tinge. That night, he wore jeans, a black sweatshirt, and black Reeboks. He was working a freelance job as a



ght, he spent two hours making a hole in a door. His reward: flatware for a hundred and ten people and an exquisite tea service.

night watchman for an antiques show at Greenwich's aging civic center.

I arrived after midnight, and we sat in the lobby at a card table, shivering a bit, the pipes clanking, as we paged through fastidiously organized three-ring binders that Abruzzini has devoted to Nordahl's case: police reports, crime-scene photographs, silver inventories, copies of phony driver's licenses. Abruzzini is considered the ranking expert on Nordahl, a fact that both pleases and irritates him. He is proud of the investigative work he did that led to Nordahl's arrest, in 1996, for six burglaries in Greenwich. Yet Nordahl seems impossible to stop: after completing a prison term, he inevitably returns to stealing. (He has been arrested more than a dozen times for burglary.) "It's like watching the same bad movie again and again," Abruzzini told me.

Abruzzini had interviewed Nordahl extensively after the arrest for the Greenwich burglaries. The silver thief, I learned, was thought to have stolen at least ten million dollars' worth of silver in more than fifteen states. Though Abruzzini is not the sort of policeman who thinks it fitting to compliment a criminal, he eventually allowed that Nordahl was the most accomplished burglar he had encountered (which, in Greenwich, is not empty praise), and easily the most distinctive.

Nordahl, who is forty-three, had a standard method. He scouted his locales through *Architectural Digest* or the *Robb Report*, or by calling real-estate agents. He'd tell them that he was hoping to buy a big old home in a settled neighborhood, and ask where he should look. During a daytime drive, he took note of houses that were set back from the road. After a nap at his motel and a light dinner, he set out at about midnight.

He parked in unremarkable locations. As Nordahl once told Abruzzini during an interview, "You have to park where it fits in. If it doesn't fit in, then you can't park there." He often walked several miles through forest or back yards, and considered several dozen houses before choosing one.

Nordahl carried two nylon duffelbags: an empty one for the silver and a smaller one filled with screwdrivers, a carpet knife, wire cutters, a wood chisel, nail pullers, a flashlight, a white cotton rag, duct tape, and a Wonder Bar—a piece of thin black steel that can pry open almost anything. Nordahl was good with his tools, Abruzzini told me, and he was patient. One night in Greenwich, he said, Nordahl spent two hours creating a hole in the door. His reward: flatware for a hundred and ten people, and an exquisite tea service.

All the while, Nordahl wore nipple-tipped cotton gardening gloves to avoid leaving fingerprints. After collecting the silver, he passed the two duffelbags through the door opening, then climbed out. He examined the silver for maker's marks, discarded anything that wasn't worth carrying, and hid the bags near a road—under a bush, if possible—on his way back to his car. "One job he did here, he parked four or five miles away," Abruzzini said. "How he finds his way to and back, it's amazing. If I gave the same task to seven-eighths of the cops in town, they couldn't do it."

Within hours of a burglary, the silver was on its way to Nordahl's fence, in New York. He preferred to deliver it himself, to insure top dollar, but whenever he was beyond driving distance of New York he sent it by U.P.S.

Malcolm X, who as a young man was a burglar in Boston, offered an account of his former trade in his autobiography. "I had learned from some of the pros, and from my own experience, how important it was to be careful and plan," he wrote. "Burglary, properly executed, though it had its dangers, offered the maximum chances of success with the minimum risk. If you did your job so that you never met any of your victims, it first lessened your chances of having to attack or perhaps kill someone. And if through some slip-up you were caught, later, by the police, there was never a positive eyewitness."

The average burglar, however, is lazy, sloppy, haphazard, unimaginative, and thus unsuccessful. Nordahl was none of these, but over time his methodology had become as distinctive as a signature. That's why Nordahl became the prime suspect in the Rhinebeck burglaries the moment Abruzzini read about them.

No thief was born as good as Nordahl, Abruzzini told me. A thief had to evolve—and foul up—along the way. If I wanted Nordahl's complete history, Abruzzini said, I should speak with a retired detective in central New Jersey named Lonnie Mason. He had known Nordahl for twenty years, Abruzzini added, and he still lived a few miles from where Nordahl began his career.

"Move to Sweden."

Lonnie and Mary Mason, their four children, and a stout German shepherd named Lexy live in a yellow clapboard house in Avon-by-the-Sea, New Jersey. Mary is an accountant with the United States Treasury Department; Lonnie, fifty, is now a stay-at-home dad. He keeps his old police files upstairs in dog-eared brown folders. He has a thick neck, a bulky chest, and a bristly brush cut, and he wears steel aviator glasses. While we spoke in the living room, Mason's ten-year-old son, Chris, sat worshipfully at his father's feet. Mason, sunk deep in a big corduroy recliner, occasionally yanked the lever, a nervous habit.

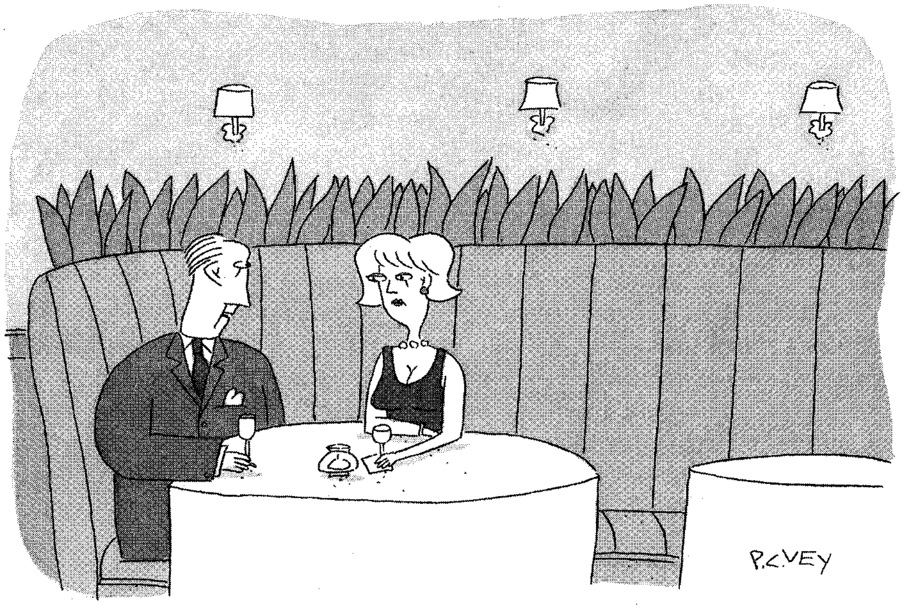
Mason was a cop for twenty-eight years, the last fourteen of which were spent as an investigator in the Monmouth County prosecutor's office. Monmouth is a pastoral coastal area known for horses, old money, and Colonial tastes: perfect for a silver thief. Mason has arrested Blane Nordahl twice. He spoke of him the way someone might speak of a roguish relative—general disapproval moderated by grudging admiration, mixed with a sense that you can never be rid of him. The first thing Mason told me about Nordahl was that he had once tried to help him reform: "I said, 'Blane, if you ever want to use your knowledge in a positive way, I'd work with you.' I said, 'You could work in the insurance industry in the area of silver. You could work with alarm systems. If you want to team up, go into a business, we could turn this into a crime-prevention program.' "

"What did he say?" I asked.

"He said, 'I don't think so.' "

Nordahl grew up in Minnesota and Wisconsin, Mason told me, and his parents divorced when he was young. His father, David, became a successful artist who moved to Santa Fe, painting realist Apache scenes. (His work has been collected by Steven Spielberg and Michael Jackson.) His mother, Sharon, held waitressing and office jobs, and now lives in Indiana. As a boy, Blane was shuttled between the two of them.

Initially, he was a good student—his family thought that he might become an



"My doctor gave me the O.K. to go ahead and die during sex."

architect—but sometime in high school he lost interest. He began cutting class and smoking pot. More than anything, he was in a hurry to make money. So he quit school during the eleventh grade, in 1978, to take a construction job. But he couldn't stay out of trouble. His family gave him two choices: become a cop or join the Navy.

In his early naval training, Nordahl won a series of awards, and spoke of becoming a Navy SEAL. He was eventually posted to Earle Naval Weapons Station, in Colts Neck, New Jersey. But in 1983 he was arrested for his first burglary. The Navy later charged him with desertion, and he was discharged.

Nordahl's first crimes were undisciplined, Mason told me, and bore little resemblance to his mature work. He was a common house thief, taking whatever was available. He usually worked during the afternoon, and he visited the same towns repeatedly. Worse yet, he had partners. "He tied up with a group of guys and started doing jobs," Mason said. "After he did the jobs and they rolled over on him when they got caught, he decided to go solo."

Nordahl came to consider burglary both a profession and an art. He once told a detective that an alleged accomplice "doesn't have the brains or the talent or the ambition" to be a good burglar. Taking crime seriously had a bracing effect on Nordahl. He stopped using drugs and gave up alcohol, cigarettes, and even caffeine. He tried to eat well, and he worked out constantly. Only five feet four inches tall, he built himself a gymnast's body: strong shoulders, skinny hips, muscular legs.

He began to focus on sterling silver. This was perhaps Nordahl's smartest move, Mason told me. In terms of risk versus reward, breaking into a home to steal a television set is foolish. Stealing jewelry requires venturing upstairs, into the bedroom. But silver is kept downstairs, in the dining room or in a butler's pantry, far from sleeping homeowners. Nordahl started spending hours in the library, studying the makers, vintages, and hallmarks of antique silver.

Like a baseball scout, Lonnie Mason liked to keep track of emerging criminal talent. When Nordahl was arrested in 1985 for some burglaries a few towns over, Mason tried to interview him, but Nordahl wouldn't talk. So Mason began to investigate him, and learned that the closest thing Nordahl had to a fixed address was Camden, New Jersey, a ragged city across the river from Philadelphia, and an hour's drive from Monmouth County.

In the spring of 1991, there was a rash of silver burglaries in Rumson, New Jersey, and Mason was called in to consult with the local police. At the time, most of Nordahl's robberies took place on Thursday nights. So on the following Thursday evening Mason had sixteen men assigned to him for an overnight stakeout. They blanketed a two-block area of Rumson. By Friday morning, with no sign of Nordahl, Mason was relieved. "I thought, Thank God," Mason told me. "Maybe he saw one of our guys and called it off." Just after Mason got home and went to bed, his boss phoned. "He said, 'Can you tell me why I authorized all this overtime? Because he hit three houses last night.' And I said, 'Well, what section? Because I know one section he didn't hit.' My boss gave me the addresses, and it was the two-block radius we were in."

Mason learned to recognize the signs of Nordahl's presence. If someone climbed a telephone pole and snipped the alarm wires, that was Nordahl. (Later, when he got better at evading alarms, he abandoned this method.) If a burglar had somehow stolen the silver without disturbing the pair of Rottweilers inside, that was Nordahl. (It is the whiff of a person's sweat, triggered by adrenaline, that agitates a dog, but Nordahl—whose mother had bred Alaskan malamutes—was oddly affectless.) From soil samples taken outside victims' homes, Mason learned that Nordahl sometimes used a chemical solution to determine whether the stolen silver was sterling or plate.

Several months after the failed stakeout in Rumson, Mason was sent to investigate a burglary in the town of Little Silver. The burglar had entered an unlocked kitchen window, and taken only the sterling. Mason called for a tracking dog and his forensics man, even though he had little hope of finding anything. But beneath the open window lay a soft garden bed. The burglar had stepped in the dirt, climbed through the window, and landed on the kitchen counter. The result was a muddy sneaker print on the counter. "I know you can't lift it," Mason told the forensics man. "But I want you to photograph that thing for the next three hours until you get a good picture."

An arrest warrant for Nordahl was issued. Thanks to Mason's earlier legwork, he knew that Nordahl was staying at a motel in Camden. "We went down there that night, found out what room he was in, then called and pretended we were the manager—you know, 'Are you checking out tomorrow?' " Mason told me. "We knew he was in there. I had the Camden County Fugitive Unit with me, and they look like the front line for the Eagles. We went and we hit the door—*and he wasn't in the room.* Finally, I see Blane hiding behind the door. So I reach around with my left hand—I have my gun out—and I grab him. I go to holster my weapon, he comes out from behind the door. He grabs my arm, and now we're wrestling. Well, we flipped, and we went over the TV. It looked like something out of a cartoon. He went skidding across the rug with me on his back—he got this big rug burn on his cheek. And we came to rest on a pair of sneakers. I said, 'Nah, couldn't be.' We rolled over the sneaker, and it had the same tread."

Persuaded by the sneaker print, Nordahl accepted a plea bargain. He served two and a half years of a five-year sentence. When he was released, he returned to stealing, but he added an important precaution to his routine. After each night's work, he would take his sneakers, his clothes, his gloves, and his tools and toss them into a lake or a Dumpster. Mason told me that Nordahl had made him a better cop; Mason had clearly made Nordahl a better burglar. Sometimes he now wore shoes two sizes too large, with extra socks, so the police couldn't even match his size.

In December, 1994, Nordahl stole nearly a quarter of a million dollars' worth of silver from four homes in Essex Fells, New Jersey, a tiny town about twenty-five miles west of Manhattan. In the coming months, he continued to work in New Jersey, the old-money fringes of Philadelphia, and Westchester County, in New York. But according to Lonnie Mason, and to police in various jurisdictions, he also began to travel more extensively: the outskirts of Boston and Baltimore (much of the loveliest Colonial silver is in those areas); Grosse Point, Michigan; Kennebunkport, Maine; New Castle, Delaware; and Winnetka, Illinois. In the winter, he could be found in Miami and Palm Beach.

He couldn't help boasting about his abilities, and spoke openly of the wonderful movie his life could make, starring Bobby (never Robert) De Niro. Mason had tried to warn Nordahl that he wouldn't be so quick and nimble forever. "He said he didn't have to be quick anymore, because he was so good," Mason told me. "He said, 'By the time you get to the scene, I'm out of the state.' " Nordahl continued to rob homes in Monmouth County; on one job, he took the silver but left behind a thousand dollars in cash that lay on the dining-room table. Mason took this as a taunt.

If an economist were to analyze Nordahl's operation, he might well be impressed. Economics is, at root, the study of incentives, and Nordahl had rationally concluded that the incentives for stealing silver easily trumped the incentives to stop. He was essentially a one-man economy, and he had pinpointed a valuable yet abundant commodity. Perhaps most important, Nordahl had found a weakness in the criminal-justice system. Robbery was a shrinking discipline—burglary rates have fallen by half since the early nineteen-eighties—and the jail sentences were light.

A psychiatrist, however, might argue that Nordahl was driven by an irrational compulsion. One former girlfriend of Nordahl's told me that he was fixated on stealing every night. "He got high off it," she said. "He *liked* going into houses when people were sleeping. He said it's more exciting to go into a house when people are there and get away with it." Lonnie Mason also described Nordahl's behavior as an addiction: "This is what he exists for, and it's all about his infatuation with money." Mason argues that silver was particularly appealing to Nordahl because it connotes the sort of family that passes along precious things from one generation to the next—a family that was distinctly unlike Nordahl's own. As Mason sees it, Nordahl remained embittered by his parents' divorce; he resented his father and became extraordinarily close to his mother. (When Mason got hold of Nordahl's phone records, he was astonished by the number of calls between the two.) Nothing gave Nordahl greater pleasure, Mason believes, than stealing a rich man's silver and turning it into cash that he could shower on his mother—who, while unhappy about her son's calling, appreciated his devotion.

Converting silver into money was the most inefficient part of Nordahl's scheme. According to Mason, Nordahl once revealed that his fence paid him between ten and twenty per cent of the silver's book value. For many years, he fenced his silver to a man who lived in Weehawken, New Jersey, and kept a small jewelry shop in the diamond district of Manhattan. The former girlfriend I spoke with said that Nordahl earned "about seven thousand dollars a day," which seems high until one considers that he rarely took a night off.

The size of Nordahl's assets is unknown. A proper assessment would require help from the I.R.S., which Mason once tried to enlist, unsuccessfully. Nordahl is clearly not a miser: a 1995 receipt trail constructed by the F.B.I. showed that he once spent nearly twenty-five thousand dollars in just three months. And this was only a fractional report, covering some of Nordahl's credit cards, but no cash.

In "To Catch a Thief," Cary Grant plays a retired cat burglar who lives in a mountainside French villa. While serving an elegant lunch to an insurance agent, he explains why he stole: "Oh, to live better; to own things I couldn't afford; to acquire this good taste, which you now enjoy." To judge by his receipts, Nordahl's spending was more prosaic. Much of his discretionary spending took place at Wal-Mart and Walgreen's; during one six-week stretch, he spent $2,462.51 at Wal-Mart alone. His clothing came from Men's Wearhouse and Today's Man; there were charges of $79.34 and $132.24 for adult-video rentals; and a bill for $47.40 from Al's Pawn-a-Rama, in Lake Park, Florida.

The ex-girlfriend told me that Nordahl could be remarkably generous. She had lost custody of her young son, and Nordahl paid her legal fees to try to get the boy back. Nordahl tended to take up with junkies from the Camden area—women who had children but no job, someone who could travel with him. According to Lonnie Mason, Nordahl often supplied a woman with drugs to keep her compliant. She never accompanied him on his late-night work, but the next day he might drive her past the grand gated houses that he had robbed.

Early one Sunday morning in May, 1996, silver valued at $151,399 was stolen from Ivana Trump's house on Vista Drive in Greenwich. A few nights later, a house on Pecksland Road, several miles to the north, lost $202,829 in silver, most of it Francis I by Reed & Barton. The community was rattled by these burglaries, and the police felt pressed to catch the thief. Cornell Abruzzini, who had been on the Greenwich burglary squad for two years by this time, was placed on the case. He immediately recognized these break-ins as the work of the thief who had committed three other robberies in Greenwich the previous summer. Abruzzini had never seen such clean crime scenes. At one house, the burglar made a tidy stack of the door molding he had pried off to gain entry.

Abruzzini learned that similar burglaries had recently taken place in East Hampton; the police there put him in touch with Lonnie Mason, who told the story of Blane Nordahl and guessed that the Greenwich jobs were his work. The stack of door molding was classic Nordahl, Mason told Abruzzini: he was a neat freak, and kept his socks arranged perfectly in their drawer. Mason was eager to help Abruzzini catch Nordahl, but warned that it would be difficult to gather sufficient evidence to arrest him. Nordahl was so practiced that he was virtually untouchable, unless he was caught in the act.

A week after the Ivana Trump burglary, Mason called back. Nordahl was staying at a Super 8 in Stamford, he told Abruzzini, with a longtime on-and-off girlfriend from New Jersey named Luanne. Mason knew this because, after years of chasing Nordahl, he had managed to turn Luanne into a confidential informant. She was not always a reliable informant—at the time, she was a drug addict who regularly went back on her word—and she had returned to living in motels with her cat-burglar boyfriend. But at least she had checked in with Mason. Now Mason suggested that it was time to scare her into submission.

The Greenwich police staked out the Super 8 in Stamford. One night, they saw Nordahl and Luanne packing up the car. Although they didn't have enough evidence to arrest Nordahl, they confronted the pair, and handed Luanne a cell phone. Lonnie Mason was on the other end.

"Oh, shit," she said.

"Luanne, you have two choices here," Mason told her. "You can either stay on tour with Blane and get indicted down the road, or you can go with these cops and coöperate."

Luanne started to cry. Nordahl glared at her. Mason knew that Luanne had a ten-year-old son back in New Jersey, and he told her to think about him, not Nordahl. She cried some more, then ended the phone call and climbed into the police car.

"What are you doing?" Nordahl said. He warned her that she'd be in trouble without him, Luanne told me, since he had her heroin.

"I'll get it from the police," Luanne said.

A few months later, on August 24th, Nordahl did one more silver burglary in Greenwich—just for spite, he later admitted to Abruzzini. Luanne, meanwhile, had started to talk. Mason used a clever ploy to cement her coöperation: he drove to her house and showed her a photograph that had been in Nordahl's possession—a picture of a blond woman in a white dress posing in front of the Manhattan skyline.

"That son of a bitch!" Luanne said. She dug out a picture and showed it to Mason: an identical image, except with Luanne in it. Both photographs were taken on a promenade in Weehawken, she told Mason, just down the street from the home of Nordahl's fence. Now Luanne began to provide the Greenwich police with many details about Nordahl: how he obtained fake I.D.s, for example, by placing counterfeit documents in a toaster oven to artificially age them. With the promise of Luanne's testimony, Cornell Abruzzini was able to get a warrant to arrest Nordahl for six Greenwich burglaries.

Nordahl must have realized that he was aggressively being pursued, because Mason couldn't track him anywhere in New Jersey. He wondered if perhaps Nordahl had sought safe haven with his mother, in Indiana. He asked the F.B.I. to put her home under surveillance. Mason soon got word that Nordahl had been spotted driving toward his mother's home, his truck full of drywall. Apparently, he was renovating her house. F.B.I. agents told Mason that they would take Nordahl into custody, and Mason tried to warn them that they were dealing with an escape artist.

"I'll never forget it," Mason recalled. "It was a rainy, nasty day. They said, 'We chased him in the front door of his mom's house and out the back, and he's

"And then I thought, What better hedge than a uranium centrifuge?"

in a wooded area. We have him cordoned off. We have helicopters up, we got dogs here. It's nineteen degrees, and it's going to snow. He cannot survive in the woods for any length of time.' I said, 'How long have you been out there?' He said, 'Oh, about forty-five minutes.' I said, 'I'm telling you right now: Blane is gone. Blane is probably ten miles away right now. Call me back when you find out I was right.' Next day, I get a call: 'You're not going to believe this. He was at a bank withdrawing money by the time we were talking to you on the phone.' "

The F.B.I. flagged the credit card that Nordahl had used to buy the drywall—it was issued to one of his aliases—and began tracing his movements. He made it to Wisconsin and did some shopping in Sparta, the town where he went to junior high school, and the last place where he'd lived within the law. The police issued a teletype describing Nordahl's vehicle, which an off-duty officer spotted at a Wal-Mart. Inside, Nordahl was buying fourteen Sterilite storage containers and two boxes of trash bags. More police officers arrived in the parking lot, and they arrested him as soon as he stepped outside.

The police inventoried Nordahl's belongings in his vehicle and in his motel room, and found, among other items, nationwide motel directories, a video titled "How to Create a New Birth Certificate," a rubber stamp that read "ORIGINAL DOCUMENT," and a book called "How to Launder Money." He had been travelling with two cats, one white and one black, named Romeo and Juliet; a series of receipts from various animal clinics suggested that he was a devoted pet owner. Not surprisingly, he had no sterling silver and no piles of cash.

Nordahl spent only three months in a Wisconsin jail before his extradition back East, but it was long enough for him to earn a bad reputation. He was always shouting for the TV to be turned up louder, and other inmates complained that he kept the water in his cell running all night. This was because he was trying to escape. At night, he used a spoon to try to dig through his cell wall, then patched the growing hole with toothpaste. He told a prisoner named Dennis that he had three or four million dollars waiting for him in various banks, and promised to pay Dennis fifty thousand dollars if he'd help him break out. Nordahl explained that he planned to make his move on a Sunday afternoon, because the Green Bay Packers were on a playoff run and the guards might be distracted by the game. He also said he would kill Dennis if he tried to stop him. Instead, Dennis ratted him out, and Nordahl was moved to a new cell.

THE EXTREMELY UNRELIABLE NARRATOR
Call me Ishmael.

Nordahl's arrest was big news in the towns that he'd visited during his most recent spree. Ivana Trump had not been the only high-profile victim: in Palm Beach, Nordahl had robbed the home of Curt Gowdy, the retired sportscaster. In East Hampton, police suspected that he had made a run at Steven Spielberg's house but was put off by a motion detector. (It was also widely reported, erroneously, that he had burgled Bruce Springsteen's home in Monmouth County.) Some newspapers began calling Nordahl "the burglar to the stars," although Nordahl never knew or cared whose home he was entering. He discovered that he had stolen from Trump only when he got back to his motel and found her last name stamped on two dinner plates—which turned out to be pewter.

It soon became evident that, despite the efforts of Lonnie Mason and Cornell Abruzzini, Nordahl wasn't going to be spending much time in prison. None of the cases against him were strong. The police had no forensic evidence, no silver, no record of his cash proceeds. Nor was any prosecutor eager to go to trial with a heroin addict as the star witness. Nordahl also knew that some three dozen police departments in nine states were anxious to shift their unsolved burglaries from open- to closed-case files. Robert Eisler, a criminal attorney in Deal, New Jersey, represented Nordahl at the time. "If you're in law enforcement and you've got some cold cases," Eisler told me, "you'll give your kidney just to get somebody to say, 'I did that.' "

"Thank God Nader's back! I was afraid I wasn't going to be able to throw away my vote."

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Eisler, whose clients are typically biker-gang members, armed robbers, and sexual predators, saw an opportunity to craft a deal that would make everyone happy. "Blane harms nobody, aside from the fact you'll never see your great-great-great-grandfather's knife and fork again," Eisler said. The people who lost their silver felt violated, but most of them were adequately reimbursed. It was really the insurance companies that suffered most—and who can work up much sympathy for them?

In September, 1997, Eisler and Nordahl signed off on a deal with federal prosecutors that encompassed, according to Abruzzini, a hundred and forty-four recent burglaries. Nordahl agreed to hold proffer sessions with police officers from the various jurisdictions and describe his burglaries so that they could officially clear their cases. In exchange, Nordahl pleaded guilty only to the interstate transport of stolen property.

Nordahl's plea agreement called for him to help the F.B.I. trap his fence—who, Nordahl hinted, might have Mafia ties. Nordahl, now free on bail, was supposed to visit the fence in New York while wearing a wire. But he could not get the F.B.I.'s attention, nor could Eisler, Mason, or Abruzzini. "I'm getting collect calls from Blane saying, 'These guys ain't using me, what's the deal?' " Abruzzini told me. "Meanwhile, Blane goes back to his old tricks, and starts clobbering them in Baltimore. He may have been working for the feds during the day, but he was doing his own work at night."

In November, 1998, Nordahl was arrested again, in Baltimore (with burglary tools but no silver), and was finally sent to prison. He was released in April, 2001, and placed under federal probation. Abruzzini and Mason assumed that Nordahl would resume his burglaries, but there wasn't much they could do about it.

It was only in February, 2002, after Abruzzini learned of the Rhinebeck burglaries, that he suspected Nordahl was active again. He began helping the Rhinebeck troopers track Nordahl. As it turned out, the United States Marshals in Camden, Nordahl's home base, were also looking for him, because he had failed to report to his probation officer. The Marshals soon captured Nordahl outside a Dunkin' Donuts shop in Mount Laurel, driving a green Cadillac Seville, and he was sent to a federal prison in Elkton, Ohio. He intimated to the authorities that he had intentionally violated his probation: a man like him could hardly be expected to take a nine-to-five job and report regularly to a probation officer. Now he would max out his prison term and be set free with no constraints.

Last November, after nearly two years of refusals, Nordahl agreed to be interviewed. He was due to be released from the Elkton prison in ten days, but he had recently received some bad news: a grand jury in Poughkeepsie, New York, had indicted him for the two Rhinebeck burglaries. A helpful document had been found in the Cadillac: handwritten directions to one of the Rhinebeck mansions. That document, along with the photocopy of Nordahl's fake driver's license from the Super 8, had given the police enough information to move forward. Still, there was no forensic evidence. Tom Fort, the state trooper in Rhinebeck, told me to expect a "signature crime" prosecution. "One of our arguments is the fact that Blane and only Blane could have committed these burglaries," he said.

Nordahl seemed to view the indictment as more of a nuisance than a threat. "They're grabbing at straws, hoping to make a bale of hay," he told me. "My belief is that, basically, I've been charged based on my past." We were sitting on blue office chairs in a concrete-block conference room. Nordahl was not handcuffed—Elkton is a minimum-security prison—and he wore all khaki, including an insulated jacket several sizes too large. His hair was thinning, but otherwise he looked surprisingly boyish: he was buff and trim, with good color, smooth skin, clear blue-green eyes. But he sat stiffly, hands in his pockets, and didn't smile once during our conversation.

As Nordahl sees things, the police are as deceptive as criminals. "Society as a whole always thinks that cops are being honest, and the truth is they're very dishonest," he said. "Police say things to cover their own ass. Or they'll say things to go ahead and establish something if that's the piece that they need. They won't lie about everything—just about one thing or two things."

When I mentioned Cornell Abruzzini, Nordahl said, "This fucking guy's a clown." He had surmised that it was Abruzzini's grand-jury testimony that resulted in the Rhinebeck "signature crimes" indictment. Nordahl reminded me that his 1997 guilty plea was for the transportation of stolen property, not for the hundred-plus burglaries he had spoken about in his proffer sessions. In his view, it was improper for Abruzzini to establish his "signature" by citing those discussions. "Those negotiations, that process, is not a public record, but they've made it a public record," Nordahl said. "It's very illegal to do that. These guys don't know that I understand the law as well as I do."

He wasn't interested in discussing the details of his burglaries. "I don't want to give something, inadvertently or otherwise, and somehow it comes back to bite me in my ass," he said. I passed along a message from Richard Jenrette, the owner of the Edgewater mansion. Jenrette had said that if I ever interviewed Nordahl I should tell him that Jenrette had travelled across the Atlantic to obtain the mansion's silver, and wondered if there was any chance that Nordahl might locate it. He responded with a stony glare.

I asked him about his childhood. "When I was really young, I was basically athletic," he said. "But then once my parents got divorced my mom kind of moved around a bunch. That kind of stopped everything." He added, "I learned to work with my hands in school. I took drafting and sheet metal and carpentry and things like that, and I built great big tree forts.... If you learn at a young age, then you have an ability to visualize things, you have a natural ability—a natural balance, you know, a coördination."

He said that he had never been afraid during a burglary. "To be honest with you, I don't think anybody who breaks the law, no matter what it is, is really thinking about the other side of the coin," he said. I asked Nordahl if he took particular pleasure in stealing from the wealthy. "A lot of this stuff they don't even use," he said. "It's more of a trophy, almost. Not trying to rationalize it, but I can see feeling sorry for somebody who gets robbed of their paycheck, and that paycheck was necessary to pay for food." He added, "I don't commit crimes where someone walks up to an old lady who collects welfare and she's getting twenty dollars out of her A.T.M. That's absurd." He said of his crimes, "There certainly have been times probably I felt guilty, and there have been other times I probably didn't."

I wanted to know what became of

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

Standing on flagstones of the sidewalk at the entrance to Hades
Orpheus hunched in a gust of wind
That tore at his coat, rolled past in waves of fog,
Tossed the leaves of trees. The headlights of cars
Flared and dimmed in each succeeding wave.

He stopped at the glass-panelled door, uncertain
Whether he was strong enough for that ultimate trial.

He remembered her words: "You are a good man."
He did not quite believe it. Lyric poets
Usually have—as he knew—cold hearts.
It is like a medical condition. Perfection in art
Is given in exchange for such an affliction.

Only her love warmed him, humanized him.
When he was with her, he thought differently about himself.
He could not fail her now, when she was dead.

He pushed open the door and found himself walking in a labyrinth,
Corridors, elevators. The livid light was not light but the dark of the earth.
Electronic dogs passed him noiselessly.
He descended many floors, a hundred, three hundred, down.

He was cold, aware that he was Nowhere.
Under thousands of frozen centuries,
On an ashy trace where generations had moldered,
In a kingdom that seemed to have no bottom and no end.

Thronging shadows surrounded him.
He recognized some of the faces.
He felt the rhythm of his blood.
He felt strongly his life with its guilt
And he was afraid to meet those to whom he had done harm.
But they had lost the ability to remember
And gave him only a glance, indifferent to all that.

For his defense he had a nine-stringed lyre.
He carried in it the music of the earth, against the abyss
That buries all of sound in silence.
He submitted to the music, yielded
To the dictation of a song, listening with rapt attention,
Became, like his lyre, its instrument.

Thus he arrived at the palace of the rulers of that land.
Persephone, in her garden of withered pear and apple trees,
Black, with naked branches and verrucose twigs,
Listened from the funereal amethyst of her throne.

He sang the brightness of mornings and green rivers,
He sang of smoking water in the rose-colored daybreaks,
Of colors: cinnabar, carmine, burnt sienna, blue,
Of the delight of swimming in the sea under marble cliffs,

Of feasting on a terrace above the tumult of a fishing port,
Of the tastes of wine, olive oil, almonds, mustard, salt,
Of the flight of the swallow, the falcon,
Of a dignified flock of pelicans above a bay,
Of the scent of an armful of lilacs in summer rain,
Of his having composed his words always against death
And of having made no rhyme in praise of nothingness.

I don't know—said the goddess—whether you loved her or not.
Yet you have come here to rescue her.
She will be returned to you. But there are conditions:
You are not permitted to speak to her, or on the journey back
To turn your head, even once, to assure yourself that she is behind you.

And so Hermes brought forth Eurydice.
Her face no longer hers, utterly gray,
Her eyelids lowered, beneath the shade of her lashes.
She stepped rigidly, directed by the hand
Of her guide. Orpheus wanted so much
To call her name, to wake her from that sleep.
But he refrained, for he had accepted the conditions.

And so they set out. He first, and then, not right away,
The slap of the god's sandals and the light patter
Of her feet fettered by her robe, as if by a shroud.
A steep climbing path phosphorized
Out of darkness like the walls of a tunnel.
He would stop and listen. But then
They stopped, too, and the echo faded.
And when he began to walk the double tapping commenced again.
Sometimes it seemed closer, sometimes more distant.
Under his faith a doubt sprang up
And entwined him like cold bindweed.
Unable to weep, he wept at the loss
Of the human hope for the resurrection of the dead,
Because he was, now, like every other mortal.
His lyre was silent, yet he dreamed, defenseless.
He knew he must have faith and he could not have faith.
And so he would persist for a very long time,
Counting his steps in a half-wakeful torpor.

Day was breaking. Shapes of rock loomed up
Under the luminous eye of the exit from the underground.
It happened as he expected. He turned his head
And behind him on the path was no one.

Sun. And sky. And in the sky white clouds.
Only now everything cried to him: Eurydice!
How will I live without you, my consoling one!
But there was a fragrant scent of herbs, the low humming of bees,
And he fell asleep with his cheek on the sun-warmed earth.

—*Czeslaw Milosz*

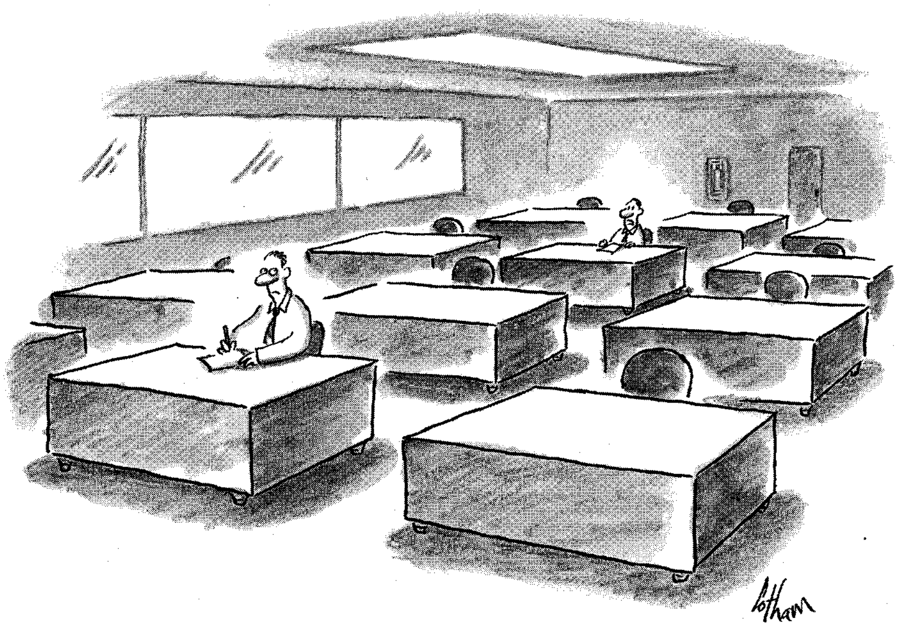
(*Translated, from the Polish, by the author and Robert Hass.*)

the silver he stole. I told him that, as I understood it, the better pieces were exported to Europe for resale, but lesser pieces were melted down. "Well, that would be speculation," he said. "I wouldn't know."

Lonnie Mason had told me that Nordahl would sometimes lose himself, eyes bugged out, when he discussed his burglaries in detail. But the story that made his eyes bulge on this day wasn't really about his skill as a thief. It was something that happened in Monmouth County in 1984.

"This was in my younger days of doing things differently—in the daytime," he told me. He had robbed two homes but had found little of value. As he was approaching another house, he was spotted by a police car; Nordahl ran a few blocks and jumped into a thick row of hedges. He took off his white shirt, curled up, and covered himself with dirt. Police officers swarmed the area; Nordahl could hear them close by. "The one thing you never do is look at somebody if you know they're coming by," he said. "I close my eyes, and I don't think about them." The police finally left several hours later, at 9 P.M. Nordahl broke into a few more houses, but came up empty. "So I'm, like, 'Well, fuck this. I'm going to make some money still.' " He found a big house on the edge of a marsh and decided to camp out until everyone was asleep—but Nordahl dozed off. When he woke up in the morning, he decided to break in anyway. But, as soon as he came out into the open, police cars arrived. He doubled back toward the marsh and could hear police officers chasing him, and a helicopter in the near-distance. The ground was mucky and flat, but he found a small ridge and burrowed underneath it. Policemen were stomping all around him, and the helicopter was overhead. "I'm thinking, They've got to be able to see me. Time goes by and nothing happens." One cop stepped on Nordahl's leg. "I thought, Now he's going to say, 'All right, buddy, get up.' Nothing happened." Nordahl stayed hidden until it was dark again, and the police left. "At that point, I decided, well, I'm not going to do anything more tonight. I went to the train station and caught a train to New York."

He leaned back and sighed. I began to think that perhaps it wasn't the steal-



"I still say we're stretched dangerously thin."

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ing that was the thrill for Nordahl so much as the escaping. He said, "If you were being chased by a bear, your adrenaline's going to be pumping, you know what I mean? Later, you might not really say, 'Gee, that was fun.' But, at the same time, if nothing else really was going on, it might have added flavor to the day. As long as you got away from the bear. But, of course, if you got caught by the bear, you know, it's another story."

Nordahl later said that he was tired of living on the run. "My whole plan was to go on with a real life now," he said. "I have no visions of being some criminal for my life. That's not cool. My whole thing is I want to get into real estate, remodelling homes, things like that." He added, "Of course, I want to be married. Of course, I want to have kids of my own someday. I've been distant from my own family, and I need to reconnect. You need to be a part of their lives and so forth. And this doesn't let you be a part of someone's life." Earlier, I asked if anyone visited him in prison. "No," he said.

Mason and Abruzzini had warned me that Nordahl always talked about changing his ways. "Blane couldn't go straight if you snapped a chalk line for him," Abruzzini said. Luanne, his ex-girlfriend, had also told me that he would never stop. "He'll be seventy-eight with a goddam cane, walking down the street stealing silver," she said.

Nordahl insisted that if he could leave jail tomorrow he would not return to burglary. "I really don't think so," he said. "I think I've got to put all that behind me. I guess when you're young and so forth, if your life is mundane, a burglary can throw something in there. But then you start to realize that the mundaneness of life sometimes has value."

Three weeks later, Nordahl did walk out of jail, the beneficiary of bureaucratic oversight. He had been moved from the federal prison to a nearby Ohio county jail to await extradition to New York for the Rhinebeck burglaries. But before the extradition was arranged a judge allowed him to post bond. The Ohio authorities apparently had not been informed of his recidivist history, or of his propensity for flight.

In Rhinebeck, Tom Fort sent a sheepish e-mail to the Dutchess County assistant district attorney who was prosecuting the case: "On 12/06/03 at 12:09 a.m., Nordahl posted a $50k bond and was released from the Columbiana County Jail in Ohio. He is scheduled for a 12/17/03 hearing at the Ohio court, but I think we can probably forget about him appearing." Fort's guess was right.

Abruzzini and Mason were both furious at how sloppily the case had been handled. The bail bondsman tried calling the phone number that Nordahl had given him, but it was a fake. Nordahl's mother—who had wired the cash required for bail—swore to the bondsman that she was as shocked as he was by her son's disappearance.

Robert Eisler, the lawyer, suggested to me that Nordahl would tap into his savings and disappear, perhaps to a tropical island. Mason and Abruzzini predicted that he would go looking for silver immediately. "My gut feeling is he's back in Camden," Mason told me. "He's got a number of safe houses there, criminals and junkies. He throws them money when he's around so they can buy their stuff, and they let him stay." He added, "Blane is a creature of habit. In my opinion, he'll have done a job by this weekend."

On a Friday morning less than two weeks after Nordahl jumped bail, the police in Princeton Borough, New Jersey, were called to investigate a meticulous burglary of sterling silver. A week later, several similar thefts were reported in Bergen County, just across the river from Manhattan. These were followed by burglaries in Concord and Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Neither Mason nor Abruzzini had any reason to get involved. Abruzzini had no more Greenwich cases to clear; Mason was no longer a cop. But, just as Nordahl left his signature on his crimes, Mason and Abruzzini wanted to leave their signatures on the Nordahl case, and the detectives went back to work.

Their collaboration had not always been easy. Abruzzini, as smooth and fastidious as Greenwich itself, approaches his job like a clinician. He likes to draw diagrams and flow charts depicting a criminal's activity. Mason is more intuitive, a believer in street smarts and grunt work. But now the two men combined their strengths: Mason became the lead general in the Nordahl manhunt, while Abruzzini coördinated the efforts of various detectives. Police officers in several states went looking for any paper trail that Nordahl might have generated—a rental car, parking tickets, motel check-ins. They studied surveillance tapes from motels near the various silver burglaries; they watched the homes of his girlfriends around Camden.

Mason suggested a replay of the flip-the-girlfriend trick. The police caught up with Lisa, the blond woman in the photograph that Mason had shown Luanne back in 1996. Lisa had recently violated probation herself, so the police picked her up in Camden for questioning. The manhunt had by now yielded a motel surveillance video of Nordahl with another woman. When the police showed a photo still of the video to Lisa, she cursed: the woman was her best friend. Lisa began to talk. Nordahl had stayed with her after jumping bail in Ohio, and he had gone back to stealing and was flush with cash. She told the police that Nordahl was now fencing his silver with some Russian mobsters on Canal Street.

"Once we have that exact location, we'll go in there, show Blane's picture," Mason told me in mid-January. "We'll say, 'We know he's fencing here, and when we arrest him he's facing a life term and he'll turn on you.' Within a week, we'll find Blane in a drum in the East River, because that's how these guys play." Mason said he would be comfortable with that outcome. "I'm cold and calloused," he said. "The bottom line is, Blane's gotten away too many times. Maybe this would be the fitting end to a life in crime."

Mason's reply stunned me: he had never struck me as remotely hard-hearted. I knew that he had grown tired of pursuing Nordahl. I began to think, too, that Mason, who had offered to help Nordahl turn straight, was disappointed in him. Months earlier, I had asked Mason what other kind of work Nordahl might be suited for. "With his mind?" Mason said. "I honestly don't think there's anything Blane *can't* do."

If Mason was right about the Russian mobsters, then it was the police who saved Blane Nordahl's life. Lisa told them that Nordahl had occasionally stayed in Philadelphia with her sister and her brother-in-law. The police had Lisa and her sister set Nordahl up—call him, tell him everything was O.K. there, and invite him to come by.

Nordahl drove up that night in a black Ford Explorer and circled the block. He parked, approached the house, and once inside was set upon by three cops. A dozen more waited outside. He fought hard, and wound up in a Philadelphia jail cell with a face like a smashed tomato and the sour knowledge that the police had been helped by his close friends.

In the coming weeks, various police jurisdictions began to fight over the right to prosecute Nordahl. He entered his jailhouse-lawyer mode, hoping once again to roll up the assorted charges into a single light plea. But on March 23rd he was finally extradited to Poughkeepsie. At his arraignment, the Dutchess County prosecutor said he planned to argue that Nordahl should serve twenty-five years to life if convicted for the Rhinebeck burglaries. Nordahl flushed when he heard this. Later, after he was photographed and fingerprinted at the trooper barracks, I tried to ask him a few questions. "Now is not a good time for me" was all he would say.

For months, I had put off calling Nordahl's mother, Sharon Fitzsimmons, who now works as an accountant in a state prison in Indiana. The police warned me that if Nordahl found out that I had called her he would stop talking to me—and that Fitzsimmons would never talk anyway. But now I tried her.

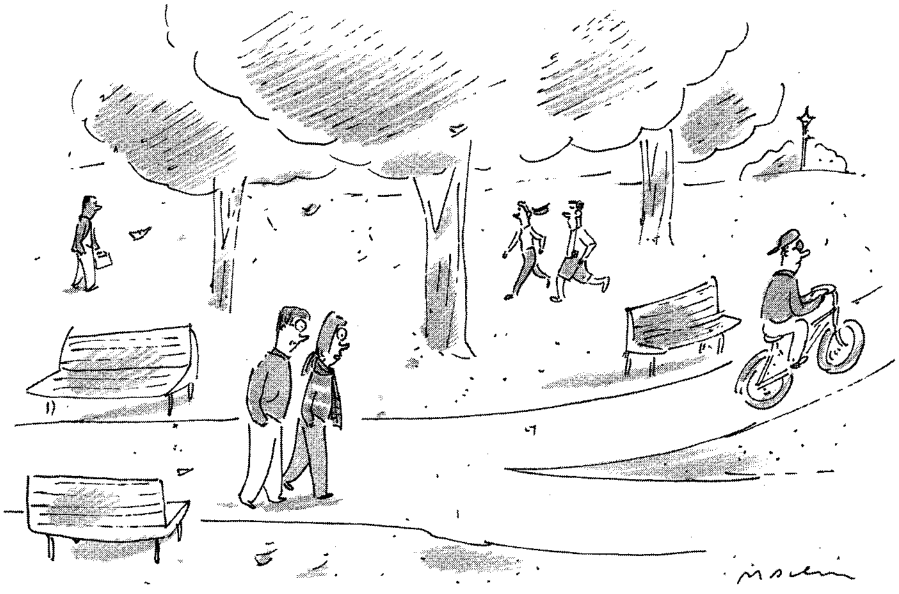
"He's not a completely bad person," she told me. "He's a very likable person. I think his big problem was intelligence and no common sense. I just wish this would all come to an end. The last time I talked to him about what he was doing—this was a few years back—his response was that it's an excitement thing. He said he got bored. So I said, 'Well, why don't you take up skydiving?' I said, 'We're not wealthy people, but we'll back you up. We'll support you morally, we'll be there for you.' "

Lonnie Mason once told me about his hunch that Nordahl had walled up his savings inside his mother's house when he renovated it, and I asked Fitzsimmons if this was true. She laughed hard. "I've heard it all. 'You've probably got cans of money buried in your back yard!' You think with six dogs they wouldn't have dug something up?"

She told me what a good and smart and interesting kid Blane had been, but mostly she talked about how disappointed she was. "What I've had to do is basically realize these are his decisions," she said. "I've told him I can't help him anymore. He's over forty now, and his decisions are his own."

Although Blane had always written to her regularly, Fitzsimmons said, he rarely discussed his troubles. But his recent letters "have a different edge to them," she told me. "He's concerned that it's going to be a life thing. I think basically he's scared. He's saying he wants to get on the right path now, for good."

Then she opened a recent letter and read me a bit: "I don't want to die in jail, and I don't want you or dad to pass away without seeing my life change." She paused, then said, "I've never heard that from him before." The letter was only a slightly different version of the story that Nordahl had pitched to me recently—and to Cornell Abruzzini, and to his lawyer, and probably to half a dozen others. But I didn't need to tell that to his mother. She sounded as if she didn't believe him, either. ◆



"You'd be perfect for me if you weren't so perfect for me."

THE ISLANDERS

BY ANDREW SEAN GREER

Later in their travels, of course, they will not go out in rain like this. A heavy, silencing kind of rain, a hand over the sky's mouth, a car door shut upon a hostage. They will be patient travellers by then; they will sit comfortably in Victorian tea shops and watch the soaked pedestrians running by, or they will shop for sheets or sweaters or anything else that they desire. But to take a day off at the very start of a trip, to tear up plans; that is impossible to do. It would be like spending a honeymoon apart.

So they are out in the rain, driving past what the guidebook calls a "Bronze Age fort." Low hills rise behind them, shaded down to gray by the rain, and to their left lies a loop of stones and the sea. The sea is nothing but a blind spot in the downpour. They are in Ireland.

Maddy is reading the guidebook as they pass the fort. She is nearly forty, a small, kind woman on vacation with her oldest friend; she is a linguistics professor at a college in California and is used to being in charge of things, of people. But she is not in charge here; her friend Cat is driving. They hit a rock and Maddy flinches. They ford a stream and she reads aloud from her book as if it were something she knew: " 'There has never been a bridge on this spot.' "

"Jesus Christ, where did you find that guidebook?" Cat says, laughing, driving with a wild flair.

Cat is a year older than Maddy, a New Yorker in a black trenchcoat, thick black-framed glasses, and short blond hair; by now, she has managed to erase all signs of her poor Midwestern childhood. She has done well importing sunglasses from China, a business that she herself finds ridiculous. She is nearly six feet tall. The trenchcoat, magnificently striped inside, came out of a giant leather bag that is, to Maddy, a source of endless wonders. From it, Cat produced, on the plane, homeopathic travel remedies and blow-up pillows. Just last night: an enormous orange scarf (now worn as a sash). In a few weeks, of course, like any assistant travelling with a magic show, Maddy will learn the tricks and limits of the bag. But today her old friend can still astound her.

"There has never been a bridge on this spot," Cat repeats. "What kind of guidebook would mention what isn't there?"

"The woman at the store recommended it." There is a whir of irritation inside Maddy, like the rising summer sound of insects. This trip is a kind of reunion, a sudden, special trip after years of living far apart, and perhaps, unlike when they were young, the old friends aren't quite used to each other. Jokes that fall flat. Cat's shifting tempers. Maddy's sudden silences.

"Note this field," Cat suggests. "It is not a battlefield of any kind."

Her coarse laughter is too loud for the car, and Maddy is not in the mood. She looks back at her flawed guidebook. She has read as far as the chapter on the Blasket Islands. A few chapters later, there is a bit on the Tinkers, the mysterious group of people who travel around Ireland pulling small scams, or sometimes committing bloodier crimes: luring tourists to be mugged or beaten or worse. But she has not reached that section yet.

It was Cat who first told her about the Blaskets; she had learned about them years ago and became obsessed with them. Maddy fears that they are also a flimsy motive for this trip, which has no obvious purpose except that Cat called early one morning from New York, forgetting the time difference in California, as ever, to announce that she was taking Maddy to Ireland. Not Maddy and her husband, Jason; just Maddy. "Why Ireland?" Maddy asked, half asleep, trying not to wake Jason, who looked so angry as he slept, as if burning off his doubt at night so that in the morning he could be a husband to her; Maddy was unaware that simply by asking this she was already on her way to Ireland, already drawn into Cat's plans.

"Well, who doesn't want to go to Ireland?" she answered.

As always, any version of the world other than her own was unthinkable. Maddy remembers it now, that persistent, childish trait of hers. Full of stubborn joy.

All Cat seems to know for sure about the Blaskets is that they are a cluster of small, green, hilly islands just a few miles off the Dingle Peninsula—with its rising shroud of mist—where villagers with ancient ways lived until recently. She believes that they were pagan Celts who worshipped fertility gods; Maddy tells her she has got this idea from the film "The Wicker Man," and that the guidebook doesn't mention anything. Cat crossly says that she is nonetheless "really into them," and, moments later, here they are: the Blasket Islands, humpbacked mounds scattered with rocks and furred with grass. A long way off across a choppy sea. Some small white specks are visible: the abandoned houses of the islanders. A ghost town off the shore of Ireland.

"Now, that's worth coming for. That's worth coming all this way," Cat says, stopping the car and rolling down the window. A mizzle of rain and sea air comes in. She chuckles, and adds, "Hey, Maddy. On this spot, no one ever died from love."

To Cat's obvious delight, there is a sign pointing them through long, rustling grass to something called the Blasket Center. It's unbelievable; after days of seeing small stone or half-timber houses, nothing could be less Irish than what rises before them: a great glass-and-wood structure, like a Scandinavian hotel, set out on a cliff with a direct view of the lost islands. Someone has planned parking for dozens, though there are only a few cars in the lots, and no buses. There is something patient, hopeful in the sound of the waving grass now that the rain is ending. Somewhere off to the left, Cat and Maddy hear the radio static of the sea.

The men behind the ticket counter are young and handsome. When asked, though, they claim not to have any Blasket blood. "Did I insult them?" Cat whispers as she and Maddy make their way down an echoing gallery. At the far end, they can see a framed and glorious view of the Blaskets; side arches hint at additional galleries, exhibits, but there is no trace of other visitors. They have been informed that the restaurant's special today is Thai Fish Cakes—rather a surprise—and that the video presentation has already begun. But only just; they can make it if they scurry. That is the word the handsome men use: "scurry." The sound of Cat's and Maddy's running feet echoes up to the skylights.

The Audio-Visual Theatre smells of new upholstery and glue; as their eyes adjust to the darkness, Cat and Maddy can see seating for more than a hundred. But they are utterly alone; the video presentation has begun in an

ALEN MacWEENEY, "IRISH TRAVELLERS" (1965)

empty room. Perhaps a computer is in charge. With the whispered chatter of adolescents, they take seats near the rear and Cat brings out a package of something from her magic bag. "What are these?" Maddy asks, but she cannot hear Cat's response, so as an act of faith she takes some.

They seem to have missed some crucial piece of information, because for a little while the video is confusing. An old man pokes through a leaf pile with a stick while an even older voice reads stilted poetry about a sinner; also, it takes some time for Cat and Maddy to get used to the accents. Eventually, some blotchy black-and-white footage shows Blasket Islanders (or "Blasketeers," as Cat has begun to call them) moving in that jerky, silent-movie way around their houses, herding sheep, blinking suspiciously at the cameraman. There are some thirty kinds of flowers on the islands, and several kinds of butterflies. Maddy decides that what she is eating is Raisinets. Elegant violin music plays during intercuts of birds and the sea; a voice tells them that people were sighted on the islands in the nineteenth century. The video shows a priest arriving by boat to read Mass; they were not pagans, after all.

In the darkness, Cat whispers, "I'm sort of not into them anymore."

Back to the black-and-white; maybe a dozen men at a prayer service. It seems that they ran out of women, and the men grew too old, and the very youngest fled to the mainland for some other kind of life. In 1953, the remaining Blasketeers had to be evacuated by the Irish government. There is footage of this also: humiliated old men being boated over to the mainland, to a world utterly foreign to them—in fact, to the very spot where Cat and Maddy are sitting. The old man with the stick turns out to be the son of one of these men, living in Springfield, Massachusetts. Apparently, there is a whole Blasket community in Springfield. Unceremoniously, the video presentation ends; perhaps the computer has decided to stop things early.

Out in the bright gallery again, the two women are dumbfounded. "That's it?" Cat whispers, staring at the photographs of the last Blasketeers. "That's it? A whole museum about these pathetic people?" Something metallic is rising in her voice.

"And Thai fish cakes, too," Maddy adds.

"No wonder nobody's here!" Cat says. Maddy recognizes the tone; it's laughter—a new kind, pleased and ruthless. "I mean, they present it like it's the Holocaust, all that violin music and poetry and sad people. But they were only there for, like, eighty years. And let's face it: they had to be evacuated *because they simply couldn't hack it!*"

Cat's face is wide open with joy; Maddy is drawn in at last, just as when they were young. Maddy imitates the video, the slightly American brogue of the narrator: "Let us consider the mystery of the Blasket Islanders. Why were they so dumb?"

Cat joins in: "Was it the sheep? The bad poetry?"

"Was it the butterflies?"

Down at the other end of the gallery, the attendants stare with their pale faces, concerned by the echoing laughter. At this end, as in an old portrait, the Great Blasket Island itself sits framed behind glass: solemn, its green hills buxom, its head veiled by a private rain.

There were times in Maddy's youth when she wondered if she was unlovable. It was a stupid, indulgent thought, a furtive hate she saved for hot May afternoons when she lay alone in bed. There, too, lay the vague, half-hearted thought of suicide. At twenty-two, no man had ever loved her; none had ever seemed to care about her for very long; her last boyfriend had ended things after two months, without ever having slept with her. When she asked why, he had answered (with that cruel plainness that comes with innocence, with youth), "I wasn't sure I was attracted to you." Wasn't sure. He had been waiting for two months to be sure, had looked at her from all sides, and had found his answer at last: *No.*

To remember that phrase of his, to repeat it in her head—"I wasn't sure . . ."—what a satisfying agony. Maddy used to bring it out in her worst moments, like a miser with a precious jewel.

It turned out, of course, that she had merely had a run of bad luck. Any older person could have told her this. She was not worthless, or chemically depressed; that awful doubt disappeared by her late twenties, when the kinds of men she'd dated before—rich, dull, and sexy, always girl-watching with drinks in their hands—held no appeal for her at all. Instead, she found grinning, eager men who acted as if she were the cause of all their joy, kind and loyal men like Jason; men who could not keep their hands off her, who missed her when she was gone. She forgot all about that unlovable girl.

But back then, in the bad times, Cat had been her great ally. Cat, whom she had met at Brown, in a playwriting class, where they were assigned as partners. They began to spend all their time together, working on a play that began, according to Cat's vision, with a dozen women at a costume ball who all come dressed as Scarlett O'Hara. Cat was an inconsistent girl, often calling Maddy to persuade her to come to the movies, but snapping in irritation if Maddy tried to invade her own solitude. She taught Maddy to sing in Portuguese, to shoplift mascara, to play a drinking game called Spoons; Maddy told Cat the secrets of her love life, her ambitions, and she gave to Cat her smiling patience, her fascination, and her fierce devotion. For two years after college, they shared a West Village apartment. There Maddy confided her fears while Cat sat smoking beneath a Blondie poster. "That's stupid" was all she said, then stubbed out her cigarette. Cat, who had no man, no history of love. Who could have met or trumped Maddy's woes with a lonely full house of her own, as any other female friend would have, arguing over who was uglier, less loved. Instead, Cat said what she believed to be true. That it was stupid. That Maddy was intensely lovable. Cat loved her, after all, and it was inconceivable to her that anyone would not share her opinion. On films, books, people. It irritated her to think otherwise.

"That's stupid. Pass me the lighter."

Had she meant to save Maddy's life?

They visit another miserable church shaped like an upturned boat, an ogham stone in a mystically deserted cemetery, a saint's house, and then stop for lunch at a dark café that must have changed hands recently, since the owner seems flustered by everything on the menu and finally, smiling, offers only beef stew. The view is of cows and low

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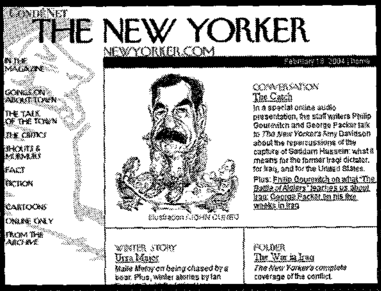

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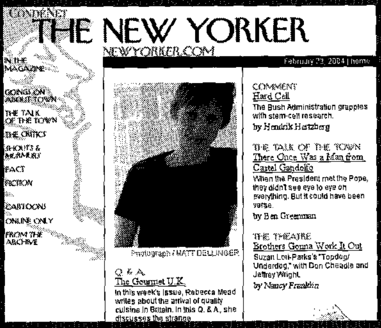

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Photograph / MATT DELLINGER

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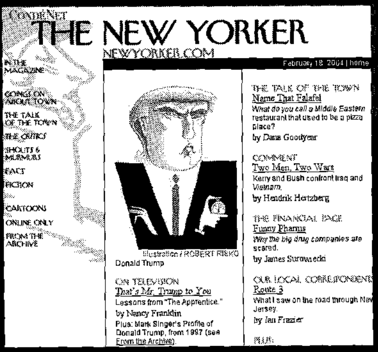

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stone walls and blurred water. Maddy is starved, but Cat is in some kind of trance, and proceeds to relate the entire plot of a science-fiction book she had just finished and didn't really like. She tells the story while holding a spoonful of stew three inches from her mouth, but she is so involved in the telling that she keeps bringing the spoon close to her lips, and then taking it away as she remembers some new twist of the plot; this lasts for almost forty minutes before she finally takes a bite. Maddy is fascinated and slightly annoyed by this oddity. Cat, unaware, buys a rhubarb pie for the road.

Out of the Dingle Peninsula, over Connor Pass, and the view is spectacular; it is the fourteen shades of green the guidebook promises. The road gets narrower, rockier, but Cat, still driving, does not seem to mind. Their destination is Ballyvaughan and the guesthouse of Mrs. Moore. Cat made these arrangements and now reveals that Mrs. Moore offers massage and aromatherapy in the room. She imagines Mrs. Moore to be a local witch and a nudist; she makes this joke almost to herself, staring out at the view. The rain is over, at least for now; the sun is out. A cold stream flows down from the rocks and across the road. Below, on the bay, the water is as blue as a glass eye. Every field is alive with grass. It is unbearably beautiful.

Maddy awakens to very similar surroundings under a more hostile sky. She is surprised to find herself alone, the car stopped; it is parked in a gravel lot across from a moss-hided castle. The sky beyond it shows no sun at all anymore. As she sits up, she hears a voice; it's Cat, in a nearby phone booth.

"No," Cat says bitterly into the phone. Through the rain-beaded glass, Maddy can see her friend's face, her lips curled in some kind of disgust. She is clutching the orange scarf in her free hand. "No, we got lost. We got delayed." Another long pause, and Cat says firmly, "We will make it, Mrs. Moore."

Maddy looks at the dashboard clock; two hours have passed. Something has changed. The barometer inside her senses it; she can feel it through the door of the car, through the phone-booth enclosure. She braces herself. Something has changed in Cat; something has happened.

Cat hangs up the phone and stares at it for a moment. She looks bright and cold and lonely. Then she turns to Maddy, who has rolled down the window.

"Hi there," Maddy says, feigning drowsiness. "Where are we?"

Cat says nothing. Maddy has pretended to herself that this is a natural, easygoing question, but of course it isn't. She knows very well that they are lost. So it is a needling question; it blames.

But she cannot help herself: "I guess we're lost."

"You were asleep," Cat says suddenly, accusingly. Her hair has curled in the rain and parted, showing dark roots that Maddy has never noticed before.

"You should have woken me up. I'm good with maps."

"I'm sure you are."

A slight shift in subject: "That was Mrs. Moore?"

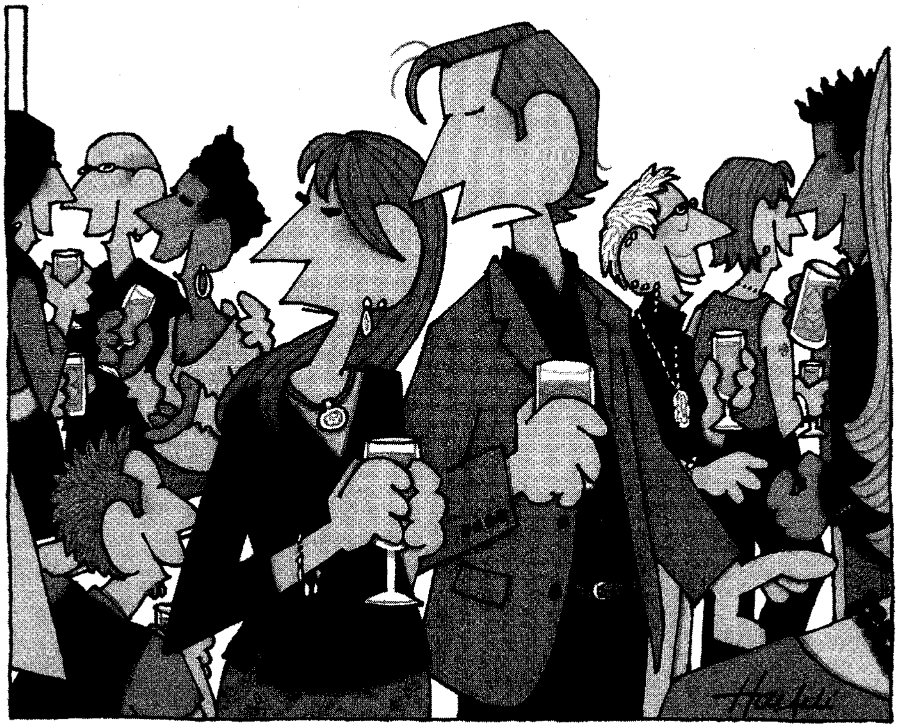
"Yes, it was. I took care of it."

Maddy cannot resist another dig: "You want me to drive?"

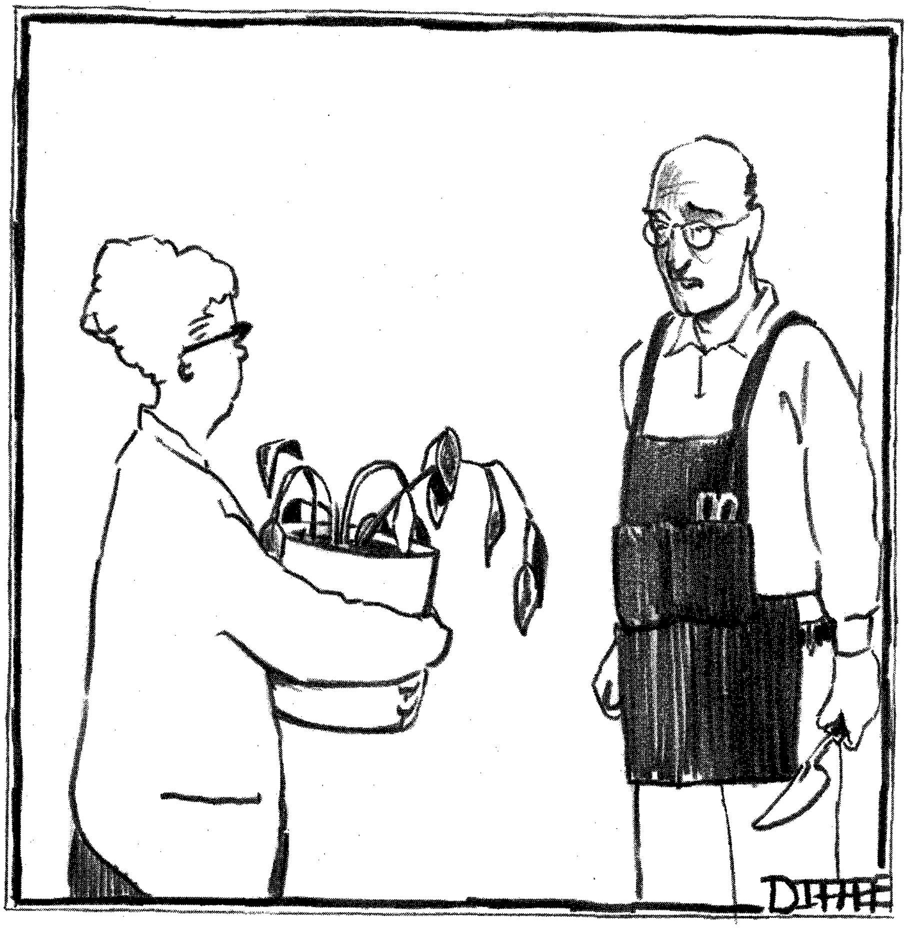
Cat gives her a sour glance; she looks like a person on the edge of hatred. Maddy recognizes this look from their youth, tries and fails to remember what she used to do with it. "I'm going over there," Cat says to her, and where she points a little store has magically appeared. "I'll be back."

While Maddy was asleep, Cat must have followed some Irish will-o'-the-wisp—a sign for an abbey, a grotto, a mermaid's lair—and gone off on an adventure that led nowhere, merely stranded them here beside this castle; she must be embarrassed, frustrated, jealous of Maddy's selfish sleep. Maddy could understand this and be kind, but for some reason she is not willing. She is too tired of it. It's not my job to make her happy, she thinks. She gets out and shuts the door; the air is rainless, absolutely neutral. She leans back against the car, closes her eyes, enjoying the last waves of sleep as they leave her, briefly imagining the friendship fading.

She thinks of Jason and the ease with which she moves with him; he never does this, is never so childish as to escalate a minor moment. At the very worst, he has to step out of the room and when she follows him he tells her to stay away, to give him a minute; sometimes he locks himself in the bathroom. When he emerges, one hand spread out on his chest as if he were pledging an oath, he is always contrite: "You were talking too fast; I can't keep up, but I've thought it through and I want you to be happy." His loyalty to her happiness is sublime,



"Don't assume everyone here is a Democrat."



"It needs more sun and less gangster rap."

• •

unending; it would take a bolt of madness to undo him. He never looks as if he hates her. She never thinks she is going to lose him.

Someone touches her arm; she starts.

Not Cat, but some chubby blond woman with a bad perm, holding a baby. She is dressed in a long shirt of faded flowers, slacks, and sandals whose clear plastic has dulled from dust. Her soft face is fixed and immobile, concentrated. She is as bland as butter. Maddy takes a step away. The woman approaches again and asks in a stern voice, "Miss, do you know how far to Dunquin?" She is Irish.

Maddy wishes she knew the answer; she loves being an expert. She considers it, looks around at the gashes of stone walls among the hills. But of course she does not know where she is. "I'm sorry, I'm not from here."

"You see, we've run out of petrol, miss, and I've got my child." On second glance, it is not quite a baby. Maybe two years old, but small and dirty, staring everywhere but at Maddy. A cold wind has begun to blow in from the sea, and it smells like leaves, like living things.

"That's a shame, maybe at that store—"

"Could you help me with our map?" the woman asks. Her expression is still focussed on Maddy, as intense and plain as ever. "It's back at the car."

There is a murmur like a mosquito in the back of Maddy's mind. But perhaps she does know; it's Cat who got them lost, after all. Maddy has always been good with a map. "Of course. I'm a tourist, though." Well, surely the woman would have guessed that.

As she follows the woman into the car park, she notices a little monument by the side of the road. A sculpture of a woman among the waves. "The Colleen Bawn," a sign reads. "A fabled maid tricked into marriage and drowned." Well, Maddy thinks, if there were a monument to every one of *those* . . .

"We're so low on petrol, you see," the woman says. She has skin as pale and thick as bond paper; smoker's skin, Maddy thinks.

"And we've got no money of our own." A toneless, monotonous voice; nothing pleading or sad in it.

They're at the car now, some make of car that Maddy has never heard of, small and rusted, a decade old or more. Her instinct tells her to walk away; she stifles it. There are clothes heaped in the back of the car, and a McDonald's bag. It looks as if the woman and her child live in there. But where did they find a McDonald's?

"I don't see a map," Maddy says. The wind picks up; it is pulling at her hair, and she raises a hand to stop it.

"It's in there, under my coat," the woman says, hoisting the child onto her other hip with a slight wince to her eyes. The child stares out at the castle; Maddy notices—strange how the mind works so constantly, uselessly—that the castle is for sale. She pulls herself back to the car, watching, sensing that she should be watching. With one free hand, the woman opens the driver's-side door.

Maddy looks into the car, where a red Windbreaker lies crumpled on the passenger seat. So red. A murmur of warning.

She begins to turn away, toward some bushes rustling in the wind, but the woman points, directing her attention back to the car: "We're just worried about petrol. So we can eat."

"I can't give you any money," Maddy finds herself saying. It takes everything she has to say it.

"I just need help with the map," the woman says, clearly affronted.

"I don't mean—"

The woman gestures toward the car. "Miss, if you could get the map for me, just climb in there for me—"

Maddy looks into the filthy car, the open door. The wind has stopped, yet she still hears the bushes rustling. "Perhaps I—"

The woman says, "Just in there."

"It's not that I—"

"All right, then, take her for me." The woman lifts up the child, and Maddy knows this is wrong, for though she cannot possibly see the man's shadow moving in the bushes, she knows at once it is a trick. If she takes the child she will be burdened, helpless, vulnerable.

For the first time, the child—a girl, apparently—looks straight at Maddy with an expression of blank appraisal. As if she had seen her type before: These overeducated women who now live in California and cannot tell anyone, not even their husbands, how much they miss New York, because in New York everything might change at any moment—you could have an affair, or bump into an old friend, or lose your life. These women who talk about breeds of dogs, varietals of wine, faucets and tile and hardwood floors. These women who come to Ireland because it is neither obvious nor unexpected, neither strange nor familiar; it is like everything else they choose; it is their life; it is probably what they expect of death.

The woman holds the child out to Maddy; the child reaches out her hands to be held. And there is nothing Maddy can do but lift her own hands to accept her. Nothing she can do but this. No way to untie this knot, no way to change things, not even if she hears the boot scraping on gravel, or notices, in the sun's brief reappearance, the glint in the bushes that anyone would know is a knife.

But from somewhere beyond the shock of weeds it comes: the piercing call of a whistle.

Years from now, Maddy's life will need saving again. She will be old; Jason will be old. She will be sitting in the waiting room of the hospital while the nurses ready her husband to see her. It will be early in the morning, the nurses having called to tell her that he has awoken from his short coma—just a few terrifying days—the result of an unexpected, devastating virus. It is common for coma patients to have very little recall; for instance, he will not remember anyone named Maddy. But he will have been told that she is his wife, and that she is arriving today. A nurse in clogs will come out and whisper that she can see him now. In Maddy's hands: flowers, bright-red dahlias, perhaps to jolt something, to be so bright and sudden that his brain will come alive with love. She will walk into his room, a pale-green sunlit room, to find him sitting up stiffly in bed, his gray hair combed oddly across his forehead, his faithful smile aimed at the nurse. "Mr. Dean, your wife is here." He will look over, and she will see it in his eyes. "Hello," he'll say. "Hello, and you're my wife?"

But she will know what he is thinking. *There must be some mistake*, his eyes will say to her. *I don't think I would marry a woman like you.*

It will take a visit to Cat in New York, a week of drinks and dinners and long talks in Cat's darkened living room, to survive it. But it will be Cat who saves her, as always. Cat, old herself, round and grumpy in a large apartment filled with Caribbean art, her white hair done up in a kerchief, still stubborn in her belief that Maddy should be cherished, a belief that does not come from mere loyalty. She will be pompous, moody, and worn out by solitude. She will change the subject; she will say, "Remember in Ireland? When we were lost? I was so mad at you, you were always so impossible. Remember how I saved your life? I was out at the store and I bought those green whistles; I came out and the car was empty. But then I saw you, with that man coming up, and I blew my whistle. And you came running to me. Remember?"

"I do."

"Oh, and remember! 'The mystery of the Blaskets. Why were they so dumb?' " The unexpected summoning of a decades-old voice: "And on this spot no one ever died from love." Sharp, familiar laughter.

But what Maddy will recall is the wet, smoky scent of the air that day, the cigarette butts in the gravel, the red Windbreaker. The child's eyes, the waiting shadow inside the bushes. The spell-breaking sound of Cat's awful whistle and how it took the bottom out of everything, let it all spill out onto the ground, and how somehow Maddy was running, pushing through the wet weeds to find her friend waiting, blowing on her whistle with a child's concentration, the trenchcoat spattered with mud, the orange scarf wrapped around her head. Strange to know, to name your protector. Her face as she glances Maddy's way, and that one eyebrow lifted like a fermata, like the very sign of love. ♦

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THE CRITICS

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PATRIOT GAMES

The new nativism of Samuel P. Huntington.

BY LOUIS MENAND

In polls conducted during the past fifteen years, between ninety-six and ninety-eight per cent of all Americans said that they were "very" proud or "quite" proud of their country. When young Americans were asked whether they wanted to do something for their country, eighty-one per cent answered yes. Ninety-two per cent of Americans reported that they believe in God. Eighty-seven per cent said that they took "a great deal" of pride in their work, and although Americans work more hours annually than do people in other industrialized countries, ninety per cent said that they would work harder if it was necessary for the success of their organization. In all these categories, few other nations of comparable size and economic development even come close. By nearly every statistical measure, and by common consent, Americans are the most patriotic people in the world.

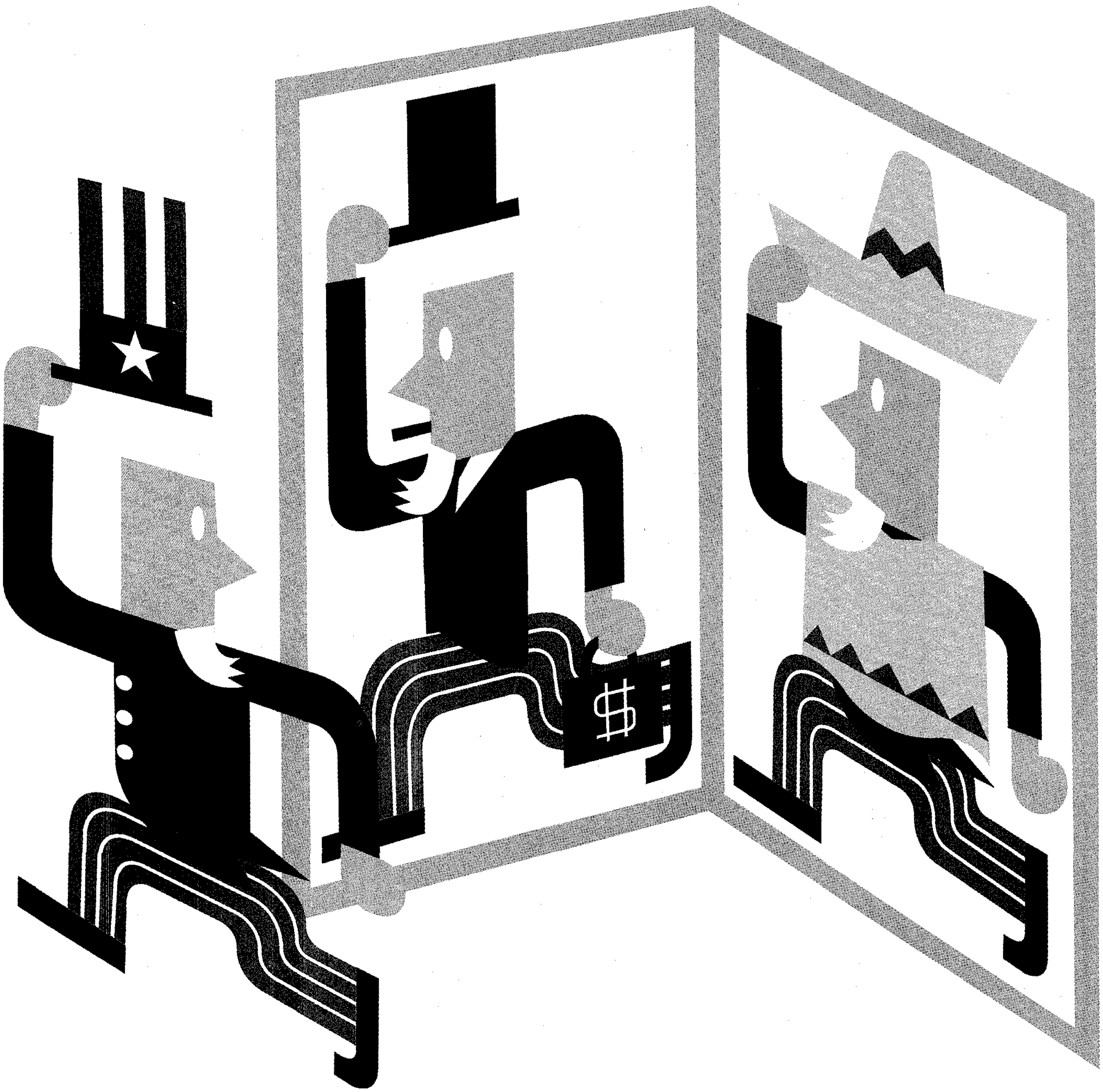
Is there a problem here? Samuel P. Huntington, who provides these figures in his new book, "Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity" (Simon & Schuster; $27), believes that there is. The problem is the tiny fraction of Americans in whom national pride, patriotic loyalty, religious faith, and regard for the work ethic might possibly be less than wholehearted. He has identified these people as the heads of transnational corporations, members of the liberal élite, holders of dual citizenship, Mexican-Americans, and what he refers to as "deconstructionists." He thinks that these groups are responsible for an incipient erosion of national identity, a development that he views with an alarm that, while it is virtually unqualified, is somewhat underexplained. Although the erosion of national identity at the hands of multiculturalists and liberal élites is something that people were fretting and fighting about five or ten years ago, a lot of the conviction leaked out of the argument after the attacks of September 11th. This is partly because the public response to the attacks was spontaneously and unequivocally patriotic, suggesting that the divisions animating the so-called "culture wars" ran less deep than the cultural warriors supposed, and partly because the cultural pluralism that had once seemed threatening became, overnight, an all but official attribute of national identity. Inclusiveness turned out to be a flag around which Americans could rally. It was what most distinguished *us* from *them*. The reality, of course, is more complicated than the ideology, but the ideology is what Huntington is worried about, and either his book is a prescient analysis of trends obscure to the rest of us or he has missed the point.

Huntington's name for ideology is "culture." The advantage of the term is that it embraces collective beliefs and assumptions that may not be explicit most of the time; the trouble with it is that it is notoriously expansive. Culture, ultimately, is everything that is not nature. American culture includes American appetites and American dress, American work etiquette and American entertainment, American piety and American promiscuity—all the things that Americans recognize, by their absence, as American when they visit other countries. What Huntington wants to talk about is a specific cluster of American beliefs, habits, assumptions, and institutions. He calls this cluster "America's core culture." It includes, he says, "the Christian religion, Protestant values and moralism, a work ethic, the English language, British traditions of law, justice, and the limits of government power, and a legacy of European art, literature, philosophy, and music," plus "the American Creed with its principles of liberty, equality, individualism, representative government, and private property." ("Human rights" was on the list in the copies sent to reviewers; it does not appear in the finished book.) This, he maintains, is the culture of the original European settlers; it is the culture to which, until the late twentieth century, every immigrant group assimilated; and it is the culture that is now imperilled.

Huntington's core values are rather abstract. It would probably take many guesses for most of the Americans who score high in the patriotism surveys to come up with these items as the basis for their sentiments. What Americans like about their country, it seems fair to say, is the quality of life, and if the quality of life can be attributed to "a legacy of European art, literature, philosophy, and music" then Americans, even Americans who would be hard-pressed to name a single European philosopher, are in favor of those things, too.

It could be argued that Americans owe the quality of life they enjoy to America's core culture, but Huntington does not argue this. He cares about the core culture principally for its unifying effects, its usefulness as a motive for solidarity. He is, in this book, not interested in values per se; he is interested in national security and national power. He thinks that the erosion or diffusion of *any* cluster of collective ideals, whatever those ideals may be, leads to weakness and vulnerability.

Most readers who are not political scientists know Huntington from his book "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order," which was published in 1996, and which proposed that cultural differences would be the major cause of global tension in the future. The book was translated into thirty-three languages and inspired international conferences; its argument acquired



Huntington argues that our "core culture" is endangered by liberal thinkers, multinational corporations, and Hispanic immigrants.

RICHARD McGUIRE

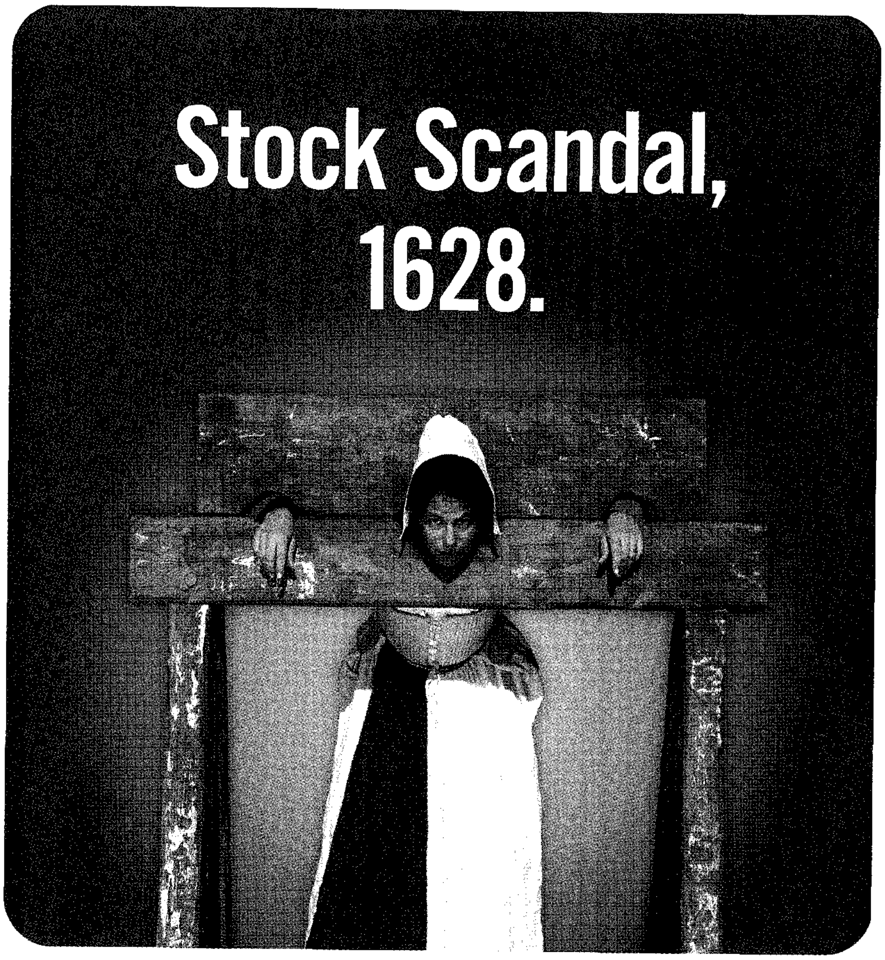
new interest and credibility after the attacks of 2001 and the American response to them. Huntington's thesis could be taken as an answer to Francis Fukuyama's idea of "the end of history." History—that is, conflicts among groups—did not come to an end with the Cold War and the demise of liberalism's main ideological opponent, Huntington argued. The defeat of Communism did not mean that everyone had become a liberal. A civilization's belief that its values have become universal, he warned, has been, historically, the sign that it is on the brink of decline. His book therefore appealed both to people in the West who were anxious about the diversification or erosion of Western culture and to people outside the West who wanted to believe that modernization and Westernization are neither necessary nor inevitable.

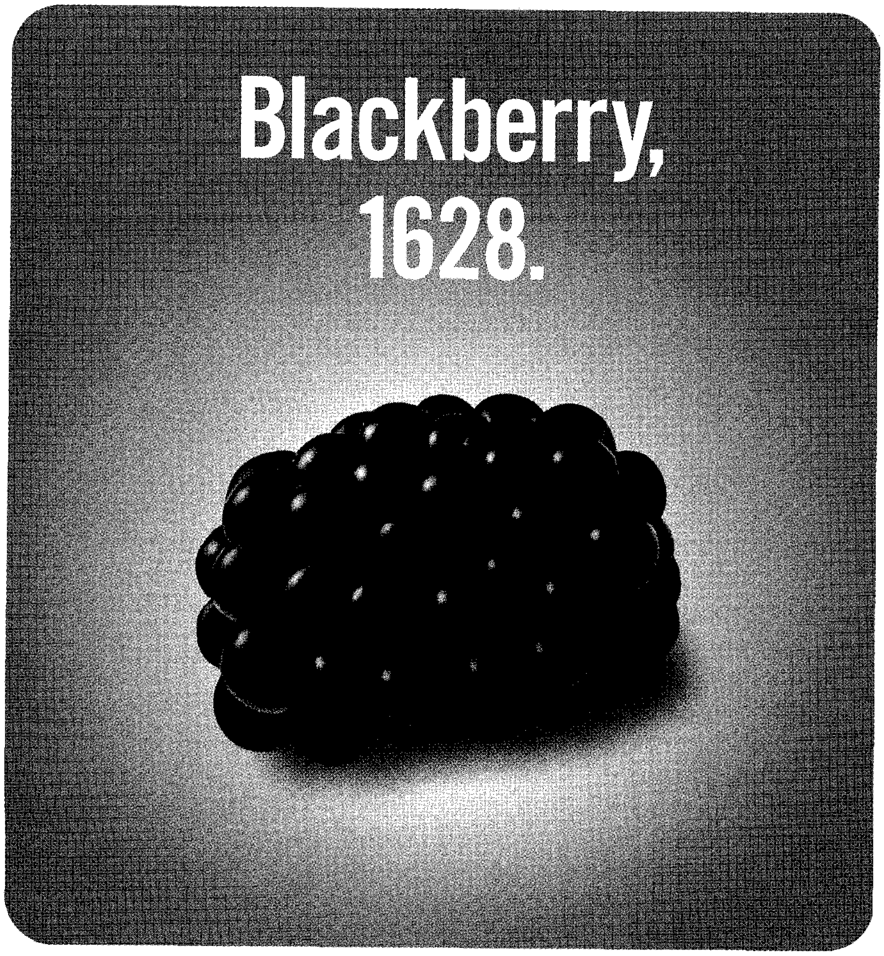
The optimal course for the West in a world of potential civilizational conflict, Huntington concluded, was not to reach out to non-Western civilizations with the idea that people in those civilizations are really like us. He thinks that they are not really like us, and that it is both immoral to insist on making other countries conform to Western values (since that must involve trampling on their own values) and naïve to believe that the West speaks a universal language. If differences among civilizations are a perpetual source of rivalry and a potential source of wars, then a group of people whose loyalty to their own culture is attenuated is likely to be worse off relative to other groups. Hence his anxiety about what he thinks is a trend toward cultural diffusion in the United States.

You might think that if cultural difference is what drives people to war, then the world would be a safer place if *every* group's loyalty to its own culture were more attenuated. If you thought that, though, you would be a liberal cosmopolitan idealist, and Huntington would have no use for you. Huntington is a domestic monoculturalist and a global multiculturalist (and an enemy of domestic multiculturalism and global monoculturalism). "Civilizations are the ultimate human tribes," as he put it in "The Clash of Civilizations." The immutable psychic need people have for a shared belief system is precisely the premise of his political theory. You can't fool with immutable psychic needs.

"Who Are We?" is about as blunt a work of identity politics as you are likely to find. It says that the chief reason—it could even be the only reason—for Americans to embrace their culture is that it is the culture that happens to be theirs. Americans must love their culture; on the other hand, they must never become so infatuated that, in their delirium, they seek to embrace the world. "Who Are We?" would be less puzzling if Huntington had been more explicit about the larger vision of global civilizational conflict from which it derives. The new book represents a narrowing of that vision. In "The Clash of Civilizations," Huntington spoke of "the West" as a transatlantic entity. In "Who Are We?" he is obsessed exclusively with the United States, and his concerns about internationalism are focussed entirely on its dangers to *us*.

The bad guys in Huntington's scenario can be divided into two groups. One is composed of intellectuals, people who preach dissent from the values of the "core culture." As is generally the case with indictments of this sort, recognizable names are sparse. Among those that do turn up are Bill Clinton, Al Gore, the political theorist Michael Walzer, and the philosopher Martha Nussbaum. All of them would be astonished to learn that they are deconstructionists. (It is amazing how thoroughly the word "deconstruction" has been drained of meaning, and by the very people who accuse deconstruction of draining words of meaning.) What Huntington is talking about is not deconstruction but bilingualism, affirmative action, cosmopolitanism (a concept with which Nussbaum is associated), pluralism (Walzer), and multiculturalism (Clinton and Gore). "Multiculturalism is in its essence anti-European civilization," Huntington says. "It is basically an anti-Western ideology."

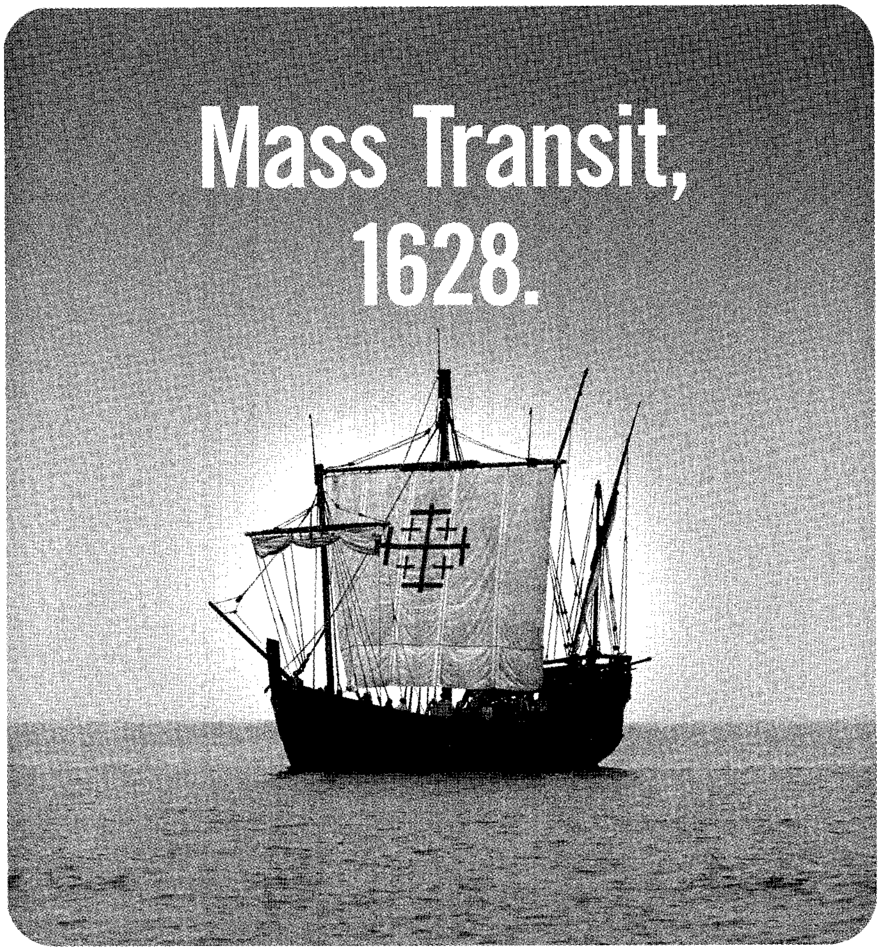




He thinks that the deconstructionists had their sunny moment in the late nineteen-eighties and early nineties, and were beaten back during the culture wars that their views set off. They have not gone away, though. In the future, he says, "the outcomes of these battles in the deconstructionist war will undoubtedly be substantially affected by the extent to which Americans suffer repeated terrorist attacks on their homeland and their country engages in overseas wars against its enemies." The more attacks and wars, he suggests, the smaller the deconstructionist threat. This may strike some readers as a high price to pay for keeping Martha Nussbaum in check.

The other group in Huntington's analysis is composed of what could be called the globalists. These are the new immigrants and the transnational businessmen. The new immigrants are people who, as Huntington describes them, "may assimilate into American society without assimilating the core American culture." Many maintain dual citizenship (Huntington calls these people "ampersands"); some do not bother to become American citizens at all, since the difference between the benefits available to citizens and those available to aliens has become smaller and smaller (a trend that originated, Huntington notes, among "unelected judges and administrators"). In a society in which multiculturalism is encouraged, the loyalty of these immigrants to the United States and its core culture is fragile. What distinguishes the new immigration from the old is the exponential increase in global mobility. As Huntington acknowledges, it has always been true that not all immigrants to the United States come to stay. A significant proportion come chiefly to earn money, and eventually they return to the countries they were born in. Transportation today is so cheap and available, though, that people can maintain lives in two nations indefinitely.

Mobility is also what distinguishes the new businessmen, the transnationals. These are, in effect, people without national loyalties at all, not even dual ones, since they identify with their corporations, and their corporations have offices, plants, workers, suppliers, and consumers all over the world. It is no longer in Ford's interest to be thought of as an American company. Ford's market is global, and it conceives of itself as a global entity. These



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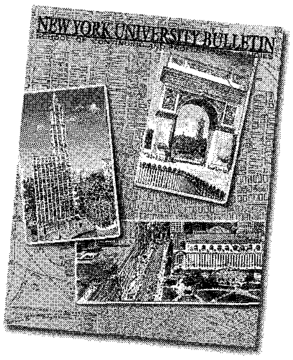

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ENTERING THE KINGDOM

As the boy's bones lengthened
and his head and heart enlarged,
his mother one day failed

to see herself in him.
He was a man then, radiating
the innate loneliness of men.

His expression was ever after
beyond her. When near sleep
his features eased towards childhood,

it was brief.
She could only squeeze
his broad shoulder. What could

she teach him
of loss, who now inflicted it
by entering the kingdom

of his own will?

—*Mary Karr*

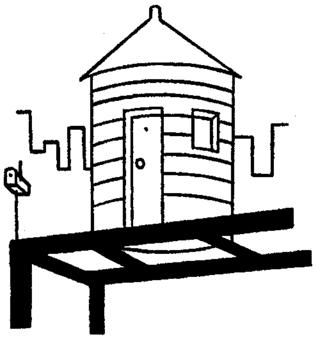
---

new businessmen "have little need for national loyalty, view national boundaries as obstacles that thankfully are vanishing, and see national governments as residues from the past whose only useful function now is to facilitate the elite's global operations," Huntington says. "The distinction between America and the world is disappearing because of the triumph of America as the only global superpower." This drives him into the same perverse position he got himself into at the end of his attack on the deconstructionists: it is better to have rivals than to be dominant. It is good to compete, but it is bad to win. If we won, we would lose our national identity. The position, though, is consistent with the argument Huntington made in "The Clash of Civilizations"—the argument that nation-states ought to remain inside their own cultural boxes.

The most inflammatory section of "Who Are We?" is the chapter on Mexican immigration. Huntington reports that in 2000 the foreign-born population of the United States included almost eight million people from Mexico. The next country on the list was China, with 1.4 million. Huntington's concern is that Mexican-Americans (and, in Florida, Cuban-Americans) demonstrate less motivation to learn English and assimilate to the Anglo culture than other immigrant groups have historically, and that, thanks to the influence of bilingualism advocates, unelected judges, cosmopolites, and a compliant Congress, it has become less necessary for them to do so. They can remain, for generations, within their own cultural and linguistic enclave, and they are consequently likely to be less loyal to the United States than other hyphenated Americans are. Huntington believes that the United States "could change . . . into a culturally bifurcated Anglo-Hispanic society with two national languages." He can imagine portions of the American Southwest being ceded back to Mexico.

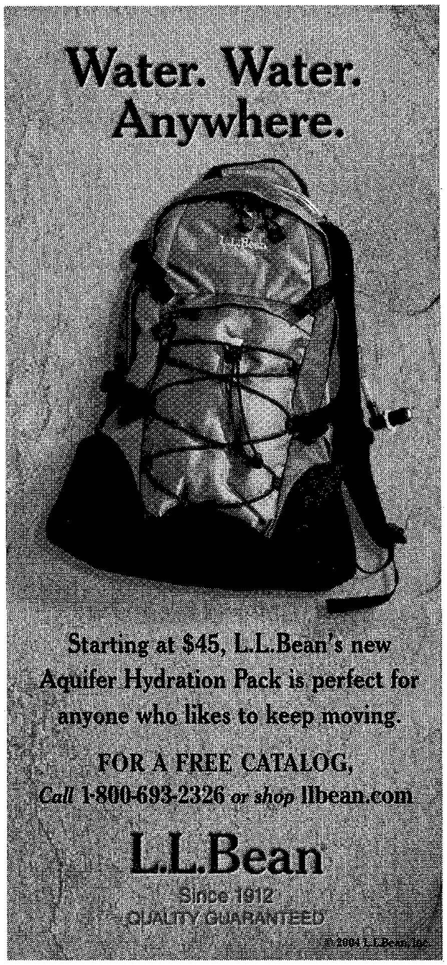
This part of Huntington's book was published first as an article in *Foreign Policy*, and it has already provoked responses, many in the letters column of that journal. Michael Elliott, in his column in *Time*, pointed out that in the Latino National Political Survey, conducted from 1989 to 1990, eighty-four per cent of Mexican-Americans expressed "extremely" or "very" strong love for the United States (against ninety-two per cent of Anglos). Ninety-one per cent said that they were "extremely proud" or "very proud" of the United States. As far as reluctance to learn English is concerned, Richard Alba and Victor Nee, in "Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration" (Harvard; $39.95), report that in 1990 more than ninety-five per cent of Mexican-Americans between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four who were born in the United States could speak English well. They conclude that although Hispanic-Americans, particularly those who live close to the border, may continue to speak their original language (usually along with English) a generation longer than other groups have tended to do, "by any standard, linguistic assimilation is widespread."

Huntington's account of the nature of Mexican immigration to the United States seems deliberately alarmist. He notes, for example, that since 1975 roughly two-thirds of Mexican immigrants have entered illegally. This is the kind of statistic that is continually cited to suggest a new and dangerous demographic hemorrhaging. But, as Mae Ngai points out, in "Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America" (Princeton; $35), a work a hundred times more nuanced than Huntington's, the surge in illegal immigration was the predictable consequence of the reform of the immigration laws in 1965. In the name of liberalizing immigration policy, the new law imposed a uniform quota on all countries, regardless of size. Originally, Western Hemisphere countries were exempted from specific quotas, but the act was amended in 1976, and Mexico was assigned the same annual quota (twenty thousand) as, for example, Belgium. This effectively illegalized a large portion of the Mexican immigrant population. "Legal" and "illegal," as Ngai's book illustrates, are administrative constructions, always subject to change; they do not tell us anything about the desirability of the persons so constructed. (Ngai's analysis also suggests that one reason that Asian-Americans are stereotyped by other Americans as products of a culture that places a high value on education is that the 1965 immigration act gives preference to applicants with professional skills, and, in the nineteen-sixties and seventies, for reasons internal to their own countries, many Asian professionals chose to emigrate. Like professionals from any other culture, they naturally made education a priority for their children.)



Finally, some of Huntington's statistical claims are improperly derived. "Three out of ten Hispanic students drop out of school compared to one in eight blacks and one in fourteen whites," he says, and he cites other studies to argue that Hispanic-Americans are less educationally assimilated than other groups. Educational attainment is not an index of intellectual capacity, though; it is an economic trade-off. The rate of high-school graduation is in part a function of the local economy. For example, according to the Urban Institute and the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Florida has one of the worst high-school graduation rates in the United States. This may be because it has a service economy, in which you do not need a diploma to get reasonably steady work. To argue that Hispanic-Americans are disproportionately less likely to finish school, one would have to compare them not with non-Hispanic Americans nationally but with non-Hispanic Americans in the same region. Huntington provides no such comparisons. He is cheered, however, by Hispanic-Americans' high rate of conversion to evangelical Protestantism.

This brings us back to the weird emptiness at the heart of Huntington's analysis, according to which conversion to a fundamentalist faith is counted a good thing just because many other people already share that faith. Huntington never explains, in "Who Are We?," why Protestantism, private enterprise, and the English language are more desirable features of social life or more conducive to self-realization than, say, Judaism, kibbutzim, and Hebrew. He only fears, as an American, their transformation into



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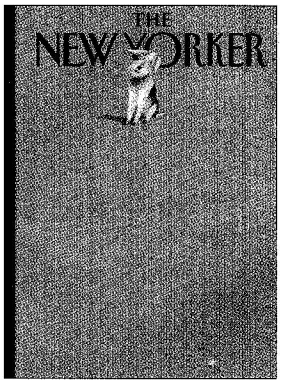

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something different. But how American is that? Huntington's understanding of American culture would be less rigid if he paid more attention to the actual value of his core values. One of the virtues of a liberal democracy is that it is designed to accommodate social and cultural change. Democracy is not a dogma; it is an experiment. That is what Lincoln said in the Gettysburg Address—and there is no more hallowed text in the American Creed than that.

Multiculturalism, in the form associated with people like Clinton and Gore, is part of the democratic experiment. It may have a lot of shortcomings as a political theory, but it is absurd to say that it is anti-Western. Its roots, as Charles Taylor and many other writers have shown, are in the classic texts of Western literature and philosophy. And, unless you are a monoculturalist hysteric, the differences that such multiculturalism celebrates are nearly all completely anodyne. One keeps wondering what Huntington, in his chapter on Mexican-Americans, means by "cultural bifurcation." What is this alien culture that threatens to infect Anglo-Americans? Hispanic-American culture, after all, is a culture derived largely from Spain, which, the last time anyone checked, was in Europe. Here is what we eventually learn (Huntington is quoting from a book called "The Americano Dream," by a Texas businessman named Lionel Sosa): Hispanics are different because "they still put family first, still make room in their lives for activities other than business, are more religious and more community oriented." Pull up the drawbridge!

Insofar as multiculturalism has become, in essence, an official doctrine in public education in the United States, its effects are the opposite of its rhetoric. "Diverse" is what Americans are taught to call themselves as a people, and a whole society cannot think that diversity is good and be all that diverse at the same time. The quickest and most frictionless way to nullify difference is to mainstream it. How culturally unified do Americans need to be, anyway? In an analysis like Huntington's, a nation's strength is a function of the strength of other nations. You don't need microchips if every other country on the planet is still in the Stone Age. Just a little bronze will do. But if the world is becoming more porous, more transnational, more tuned to the same economic, social, and informational frequency—if the globe is more global, which means more Americanized—then the need for national cultural homogeneity is lesser, not greater. The stronger societies will be the more cosmopolitan ones.

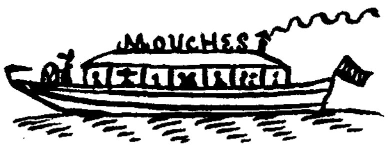
Perhaps this sounds like sentimental internationalism. Let's be cynical, then. The people who determine international relations are the political, business, and opinion élites, not the populace. It is overwhelmingly in the interest of those élites today to adapt to an internationalist environment, and they exert a virtually monopolistic control over information, surveillance, and the means of force. People talk about the Internet as a revolutionary populist medium, but the Internet is essentially a marketing tool. They talk about terrorist groups as representatives of a civilization opposed to the West, but most terrorists are dissidents from the civilization they pretend to be fighting for. What this kind of talk mostly reveals is the nonexistence of any genuine alternative to modernization and Westernization. During the past fifty years, the world has undergone two processes. One is de-Stalinization, and the other is decolonization. The second is proving to be much more complicated than the first, and this is because the stamp of the West is all over the rest of the world, and the rest of the world is now putting its stamp on the West. There are no aboriginal civilizations to return to. You can regret the mess, but it's too late to put the colors back in their jars.

And why isn't internationalism, as a number of writers have recently argued, a powerful resource for Americans? The United States doesn't have an exclusive interest in opposing and containing the forces of intolerance, superstition, and fanaticism; the whole world has an interest in opposing and containing those things. On September 12, 2001, the world was with us. Because of our government's mad conviction that it was *our* way of life that was under attack, not the way of life of civilized human beings everywhere, and that only *we* knew what was best to do about it, we squandered our chance to be with the world. The observation is now so obvious as to be banal. That does not make it less painful. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Conspirators, *by Michael André Bernstein (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* Bernstein's first novel takes place just before the First World War, on the eastern frontier of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Economic hardship and anti-Semitism have provoked unrest in the Jewish population, and Count-Governor Wiladowski, terrified of assassination, hires Jakob Tausk, an ex-rabbinical student, as a spy to protect him. Unbeknownst to him, Tausk is approached by a wealthy Jewish financier who has discovered that his only son is conspiring against the regime, and who worries about the radical influence of a mysterious rabbi with Messianic leanings. It's perhaps inevitable that an epic conceived in such grandly old-fashioned terms contains some characters and scenes that seem well worn. But, as events rush toward a bloody resolution, Bernstein maintains firm control of his plot, and painstakingly re-creates the historical landscape in which an often reluctant Tausk undertakes his counter-revolutionary mission.

It's a Bird . . . , *written by Steven T. Seagle and drawn by Teddy Kristiansen (Vertigo; $24.95).* What the adventures of muscle-bound, crime-fighting superheroes are to mainstream comics, the existential crises of kvetchy, self-loathing comics writers are to graphic novels. In this semi-autobiographical book, the two genres collide when Steve, a comics writer—and stand-in for the author—is asked to take over "Superman," a job most of his colleagues would kill for. Steve is haunted by his family's history of Huntington's disease, a genetic curse that makes Superman's celebrated invulnerability seem distastefully phony. Alternately hostile and depressive, Steve produces a series of strikingly original meditations on Superman's powers, his origins, and his relationship to humanity. Kristiansen's muted watercolor washes, the furthest possible remove from the Man of Tomorrow's primary colors, echo the prevailing tone of anguished doubt.



The Man Who Would Be King, *by Ben Macintyre (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* A broken heart can lead men astray, but few have wandered as far off course as Josiah Harlan, a Pennsylvania Quaker. In 1822, after sailing to Calcutta on a merchant ship, he learned that his fiancée in America had married another man. He set out on a journey that ultimately brought him to Afghanistan, with the mad hope of carving out a kingdom for himself. Amazingly, he halfway succeeded. Trading on little more than a flair for diplomatic pomp, Harlan became a confidant of Afghan princes and a player in the Great Game between Russia and Britain. Macintyre recounts Harlan's travels with dispatch, and draws on unpublished journals to let his subject's voice seep through. Harlan was relentless in cataloguing his obsessions, which included camels, alchemy, and fresh fruit; the first American to visit Kabul, he wrote memorably about the sherbet sold in the bazaar there, made with snow carried by donkey from the Hindu Kush.

Count Down, *by Steve Olson (Houghton Mifflin; $24).* At the Forty-second International Mathematical Olympiad, held in Virginia in 2001, nearly five hundred kids from eighty-three countries sat down to solve six math questions in the course of two days. This engaging study follows six American Olympians and investigates the nature of child genius, the role of gender differences in spatial perception, and Einstein's claim that he thought wordlessly. Along the way, Olson reveals cultural differences in teaching math: American classrooms emphasize racking up correct answers quickly; in Japan, students are encouraged to struggle through problems. The Olympians make for likable characters, playing Ultimate Frisbee and trying to psych out other countries' teams in the cafeteria. It turns out that speedy calculation will get you only so far—victory requires "sidelong attacks, inspired guesses, flights of mathematical fancy."

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THE ART WORLD

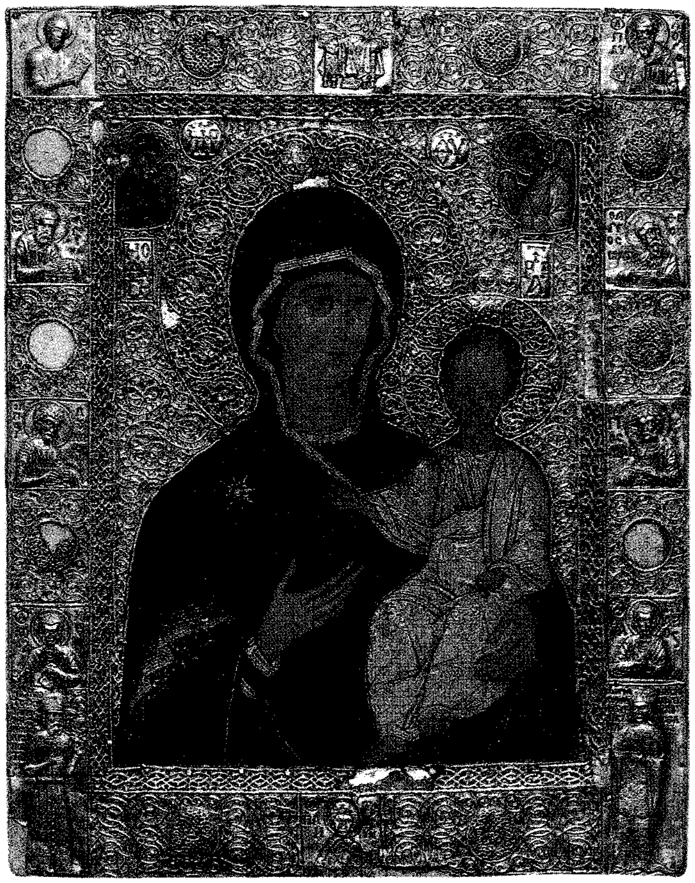
STRIKING GOLD

The final installment of the Met's Byzantium shows.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

"The city was desolate, lying dead, naked, soundless, having neither form nor beauty." This was Constantinople in late May, 1453, when Ottoman armies extinguished the eleven-century dominion of the Byzantine Empire. The writer, a contemporaneous historian named Doukas, recorded the despair of citizens who yearned in vain for aid from the West. To prevent the disaster, two treaties had been made with European powers, subjecting the Orthodox Church to the Pope in Rome in return for promises of military sustenance. The agreements were resisted by many Eastern believers, who had scant taste for ecumenism; and, in the event, no significant help came. Doukas quoted an astonishing sentiment from Constantinople's grand duke, Loukas Notaras: "It would be better to see the turban of the Turks in the center of the City than the Latin mitre." Not for nothing is "byzantine" a byword for counterintuitive complexity in human affairs. It is also the marker of a vast blind spot in common historical knowledge.

The wondrous exhibition "Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)," at the Metropolitan Museum, has taught me a good deal. I have learned that the term "Byzantium" dates from 1557, when a German scholar coined it from the name of Byzantion, the Greek port city that became Constantinople. The point was to emphasize the Hellenic roots of the empire, whose preservation of ancient texts, objects, and philosophical traditions—notably Platonism—might well have struck a Renaissance intellectual as its most important feature. Retroactively expunging "New Rome," by which the seat of empire had known itself, this tendentious rubric inaugurated the afterlife of a civilization that, apart from Orthodox sects, survives largely in alien archives and imaginations. In 1204, Crusaders plundered Constantinople and installed, as emperor, a Flemish count. Even after the triumphal restoration of native rule in 1261—the starting point of this show, the last of three exhibits the Met has devoted to Byzantium—the empire was a routinely abused poor relation of Western domains. The lost fraternal Other of Christian Europe, Byzantium (as we are pleased to style it) is an accusing ghost.



A Virgin Hodegetria icon painted in the fifteenth century.

COURTESY STATE TRET'IAKOV GALLERY, MOSCOW

Frescoes, temperas, mosaics, reliefs, marbles, architectural fragments, embroideries, chalices, candelabra, crosses, caskets, reliquaries (one stuffed with what seems like enough little silk-wrapped body parts for the assembly of a new person or two), censers, fans, processional cloths, amulets, a bell, a dagger, books, manuscripts, jewelry, vestments, coins, seals, maps, and, of course, a great many gilded icons—all are presented with theatrical flair, in careful profusion. This is a blockbuster show, which overlays the eponymous "faith and power" of its subject with those of the museum's resources of money, clout, expertise, and scholarship (the bibliography in the doorstop catalogue runs to thirty-four small-print pages). Art being secular urbanity's substitute for religion, the Met is our Hagia Sophia—the great building in Istanbul that, in its time, has flexibly glorified Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Islam.

"Greeks, Cypriots, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Russians, Wallachians, Moravians, Armenians, Venetians, Genoese, Pisans, Franks, Germans, Seljuks, Mongols, Mamluks, Ottomans, and others" vied for advantage in the tottering empire, according to a fine introductory essay in the catalogue by Helen C. Evans, the Met's curator of medieval art. Multiculturalism was a strength of the Eastern Church, which encouraged the liturgical use of local languages. This fact makes pointed sense of the static, dogmatic forms that we associate with Byzantine culture: they stood against an always potential descent into fragmenting chaos. A vigilant, held-breath tension informs even Byzantine opulence. All that gold and other precious stuff suggest wealth that is sacrificially tied up in supernatural escrow. Art was no mere ornament to the authority of New Rome. Particular images—Christ Pantokrator (Jesus holding the Gospels and giving a blessing), Jesus the Man of Sorrows, Jesus dead, and, especially, Mary with the baby Jesus—were displayed, often in processions, to legitimatize state functions. The theocratic governance of polyglot Byzantium rested ultimately on the silent power of the icon.

The Iconoclastic Controversy—anticipating a much later, similar crisis in the West, with the Reformation—raged in the eighth and ninth centuries, when successive emperors embraced the Hebraic and Islamic doctrine that images of divinity (and, perhaps, of anything at all) are idolatrous. The authorities raided churches and slaughtered protesting monks. Two extraordinary empresses, Irene and Theodora, brought about the policy's reversal, which was backed by variously sophisticated and superstitious theological views. Echoes of the conflict ripple through the Met show in icons that have special propagandistic import. Some claimed the authority of St. Luke, who was held to have painted them more or less from life. Others were declared to have come about miraculously, untouched by human hands. One icon, dating from the seventh century, or possibly earlier, called the Virgin Hodegetria, was the palladium of Constantinople, and, as such, the template for a million replicas: Mary as a hieratic goddess holding Jesus in her left arm and gesturing stiffly toward him, as the way to salvation, with her right hand. (The Ottomans enthusiastically destroyed the original when they took the city.) Icons were, and, in Orthodoxy, still are, mediums of holy presence. Their impersonal stylization guarantees their fidelity to a world in which mundane conditions, such as mass and weight, hardly apply. (No figure in any Byzantine image stands firmly on the ground.) Think of icons as visual cell-phone calls from the beyond: you don't look at them; you receive them, and you respond.

The most exciting revelation of the show, for an art lover, is its demonstration of how Byzantine decay fuelled the Renaissance. Fifteenth-century European—especially Italian and Flemish—adaptations of Byzantine motifs are included in the show, and they arrive with jolts of revolutionary beauty. Between the Virgin Hodegetria and a 1475 Madonna by Giovanni Bellini, God and humanity got redefined. Bellini's Mary addresses our gaze as a living woman, her divinity not proclaimed but only, by her preternatural self-possession, implied; and Bellini's Jesus is Everybaby, though rendered with subtle suggestions of his fate. The viewer's mind, free to wander, is drawn toward piety by seduction rather than by force. I was surprised by my first reaction to the works by Bellini, Dieric Bouts, Rogier van der Weyden, and other Old Masters—including El Greco, the Cretan icon painter who, a century later, in Italy and Spain, impelled Byzantine religiosity from stern primitivism to hysterical decadence with barely an intervening phase. Having been steeped in Orthodox fundamentalism by that point in the exhibition, I was shocked. For a moment, my own melting pleasure in Renaissance aestheticism felt shamefully corrupt and foolishly dangerous. I recovered pretty quickly, but I still feel the sting.

"Byzantium: Faith and Power" brings a universe of antique arguments to clanging life. Every object makes a claim. Over all, the show mounts a formidable criticism of Western civilization. The perspective is at once strange and unnervingly intimate. It appears at the start of the catalogue, in a written blessing of the occasion by Bartholomew, the present holder of the unreconstructed title Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch. He employs a Greek word, translated as "bright-sadness," to characterize the mood of Orthodox believers during the period of the Eastern empire's collapse. He cites the veneration of saints and of "the Theotokos" (Mary) as providing "strength, shelter, consolation, and spiritual reinforcement of a nation, which was in danger and later in bondage." Bartholomew concludes with a prayer that we Westerners "may find faith in higher values and ideals than those that are being offered by the world marketplace." Fat chance. But the Patriarch's gentle admonition—a bizarre note in a chorus of busy scholars and professional connoisseurs—resonates with the dark qualities of the show: concreted sorrow, hard wisdom. I came away with a chilly sense of having been warned. ♦

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MUSICAL EVENTS

IGNORE THE CONDUCTOR

Student composers around New York.

BY ALEX ROSS

When Timothy Andres was seven, his father, a computer specialist, brought home a teach-yourself-piano computer program. Andres was done with it in three weeks. He is now a freshman at Yale, and his musical progress is still accelerating. For one thing, he is a formidable pianist who has the measure of Charles Ives's towering "Concord Sonata." He is also a composer, with a piano sonata, a piano concerto, and a symphony to his credit. Most notably, his music is beginning to show an individual voice, which is the hardest thing for a composer to achieve.

What happens when you tell your emo-listening, hip-hop-dancing, ironically "American Idol"-analyzing classmates that you are a classical composer? "Composers still garner lots of respect," Andres told me, when I met him in between classes at a campus café. He is a tall, lanky guy, with a sensitive face and a stubborn nose. "Even my suitemates understand that they have to turn down their Mandy Moore while I'm composing. However, just because people have a certain awe of composers doesn't mean they understand what we do. It's like being a trapeze artist or a lumberjack."

Andres is making his way through the labyrinth of possibilities that the last century left behind. Ives is close to his heart; he grew up in a small town in Connecticut, not unlike Ives's New England places, and many of his works begin with monumental, dissonant gestures modelled on the "Concord." But he also has an ear for the more lyrical moderns, like Britten and Prokofiev. Recently, he has worked to simplify his style. Some new songs, based on poems by Jean Follain, have a fine-spun melodic line intertwining with a spare piano-trio accompaniment. The symphony, by contrast, sometimes moves blindingly fast through far-flung harmonic realms. It is quite an achievement for someone so young, but it will be a hard sell for performers.

Composers grow up with the idea that music is a game of heroes. In history books, they read that their forebears dazzled kings, electrified crowds, forged nations. Sooner or later, they come up against the disappointing realization that modern American culture has no space for a composer hero. That disappointment easily metastasizes into profound resentment, which no amount of success can dislodge. Indeed, the most famous composers are often the unhappiest.

"There's some truth in that," Andres said, when I outlined this syndrome for him. "I don't want to become one of the angry, lonely ones. Writing my new songs, I felt a longing not only to be talked about and analyzed but to be sung and heard."

I sought out Andres not to anoint him the "next big thing"—it is far too early to tell about that—but to find out what young composers like him were doing, dreaming, and fearing. For several months, I've been skipping big-ticket items at major halls in favor of student-composition concerts around the New York area—at Yale, Columbia, N.Y.U., Juilliard, the Mannes College of Music, and the Manhattan School of Music. I also collected stacks of scores and CDs and downloaded dozens of MP3s from the Internet. I found Andres's music on the Web site of a remarkable public-radio show called "From the Top," which shines a national spotlight on young musicians and gives them a taste of the cultural resonance that the media generally deny them.

I felt I was a guilty interloper when I entered the halls of musical academe. Some concerts were like student-faculty powwows with friends and family attached, and some works sounded like ardent serenades played at the windows of tenure. Historically, universities and conservatories have been the wrong places to check the pulse of American composition; Ives, after all, had to unlearn everything he was taught at Yale. There have been three great academic orthodoxies in American music: the late-nineteenth-century New England School, which worshipped Brahms and rejected any résumé that lacked the words "Hochschule für Musik"; the neoclassical school, which adored Stravinsky and Debussy, and required Nadia Boulanger as a reference; and the twelve-toners, who idolized Schoenberg and his ways. In the end, the house god is always the same—a European-oriented pedant who demands that young composers "justify every note," develop every idea ad nauseam, and rise above the vulgar herd.

What's encouraging about the present moment is that no single regime holds sway. Milton Babbitt, the last great Schoenberg apostle, is still a force to be reckoned with; he can be overheard muttering about excess octaves and unused registers at Juilliard student concerts. Yet he ends up giving crucial guidance to those who move in very different directions, as Stephen Sondheim can attest. Also at Juilliard is John Corigliano, who venerates Aaron Copland's populist style, and who may start rolling his eyes if the alto flute plays the hexachordal complement of what the bassoon played ninety-two bars before. Even the minimalists are getting tenure, although amazingly few composition departments give proper attention to the achievements of Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass.

Whether you write in C major or in microtones, you face the basic struggle of getting your music in front of a crowd. By and large, composers of the youngest generation have different expectations from those of their teachers; they have never known a culture that cared about classical music, and thus they aren't waiting glumly for the masses to come to their senses. They worry not only about the technique of composition but also about the formerly unmentionable arts of presentation and publicity. Even those who write freakish, antisocial music may have well-designed Web sites where visitors can download worklists, audio files, scores, art work, and rants on this or that subject. In other words, they do not hold themselves aloof. They care if you listen.

The music at the dozen or so concerts I attended was so diverse that I gave up trying to tease out dominant trends. Instead, I listened for voices that went against the grain of whatever styles they were inclined to adopt. Sung Joo Hong, who studies at the Manhattan School, has written a wonderful String Quartet that mixes the sad warmth of Barber with darker shades of Shostakovich. It culminates in a bitterly brilliant, propulsive finale that I could imagine being played by the Emerson Quartet. Scott Wollschleger, of Erie, Pennsylvania, also at the Manhattan School, has a grand sprawl of a piece called "The Cold Heaven," full of apocalyptic drones, ominous minor-key statements, jabbing semitone signals, and a shimmering close reminiscent of early John Adams. Mathew Fuerst, a student at Juilliard, is influenced by Copland, and, like Copland, he so rigorously controls his material that it never verges on the nostalgic or the sentimental. His Clarinet Quartet, performed at a Juilliard student recital, culminates in a heartfelt eight-note figure that yearns to answer Ives's "Unanswered Question."

Muhly and Andres: enthusiastic about every aspect of their art.

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

Over at the avant-garde end of the spectrum is Paula Matthusen, at N.Y.U. The whispering, scratching, plinking, and sighing of her "run-on sentence of the pavement," for piano, Ping-Pong balls, and electronics, has an oddly sad, entrancing effect, especially when the stream of noise coalesces into slivers of song. I was completely gripped by David T. Little's "Sunday Morning Trepanation," for mixed quartet and CD playback, which equates contemporary religion with the drilling of holes in the skull. This ultra-dissonant composer, who doubles as a heavy-metal drummer, is coming to Princeton in the fall, and every bad-ass new-music ensemble in the city will want to play him.

Some of the very youngest composers—child prodigies, even younger than Timothy Andres—act as if the twentieth century had never happened. Athena Adamopoulos, a seventeen-year-old student in Juilliard's Pre-College Division, has written an effortless late-Romantic effusion entitled "Soliloquy," which none other than Yo-Yo Ma has played. Jay Greenberg, also of the Pre-College Division, is all of twelve and is working on his Fifth Symphony. He has mastered the art of orchestration, and his Brahmsian music positively glows in the ears. For him, it is 1904 and anything is possible.

Of the composers I heard, the one who seems best poised for a major career is Nico Muhly, a twenty-two-year-old, spiky-haired, healthily irreverent student of Corigliano's at Juilliard. He has formed his own private repertory, running from the purest, hootiest English choral music to minimalism in its raw, classic phase. These tastes reflect two sharply different musical experiences—singing in a boys' choir and working in Philip Glass's electronic studio. He also listens to a lot of off-kilter pop, like Björk, Múm, Ladytron, and Fischerspooner. "Nothing is better than Prince," he advised me. On a recent afternoon, he enjoyed motets by William Byrd, Khia's salacious hip-hop track "My Neck, My Back," John Adams's "China Gates," and Wagner's "Götterdämmerung"—the last for a school paper.

If Muhly simply dumped his diverse musical loves into a score, he would have an eclectic mess. Instead, he lets himself be guided by them, sometimes almost subliminally. In "So to Speak," a short piece that the Juilliard Symphony recently played at its annual student concert, he asks players to be "spastic," to "smudge" certain notes, to "ignore the conductor"; he is trying for a raucous, un-"classical" sound. But the work itself is austere and solemn in intent. It is based on Thomas Tallis's Pentecost anthem "Loquebantur Variis Linguis"; those spastic woodwinds are speaking in tongues. The music spins away into a kind of gritty ecstasy. This and other Muhly pieces achieve a cool balance between ancient and modern modes, between the life of the mind and the noise of the street.

Muhly was not the only student composer I met who had an intelligently babbling enthusiasm for every aspect of his art. The cynic in me wondered when these bright young things would undergo the inevitable plunge into disenchantment and despair. The optimist in me wondered if they might be able to turn the classical cynics into fools. Sung Joo Hong said, "If you know what you are doing, and you really want to do this crazy thing, this is the century where we could get the richest music ever made." ◆

THE THEATRE

TROUBLE IN MIND

Insanity and insects in "Guinea Pig Solo" and "Bug."

BY HILTON ALS

At the time of his death, in 1837, Georg Büchner, the influential German dramatist, novelist, and essayist, left behind some unfinished works. Of them, "Woyzeck," a morality play that details a lowly soldier's slow descent into madness, remains the most significant and the best known. The story of "Woyzeck" was based on that of Johann Christian Woyzeck, a German soldier and barber who murdered his lover in a jealous rage in 1824. Like the real man, Büchner's Woyzeck is exploited and beaten down by a number of forces: an Army captain who censors his subordinates' attempts to exercise free will; a regimental doctor who uses him as a specimen for a study on human behavior; another man who cuckolds him and then laughs at his despair. Something of a Teutonic Pierrot, Woyzeck does not know what to do with language. How could words convey the circuitous path that his inner life takes? He is lost—caught—in the thickets of doctrine, betrayal, and powerlessness. But his nobility and pathos pervade the play, too, partly because Büchner lets us see his protagonist hacking his way through those thickets—with nothing more than a penknife.

In Brett C. Leonard's ambitious adaptation, "Guinea Pig Solo" (a LAByrinth Theatre Company production, at the Public), Woyzeck is re-imagined as José Solo (the brilliant John Ortiz), a veteran of the current war in Iraq, who finds himself trapped in post-September 11th New York. José has the eyes of a stuffed panda, glistening with vacant hurt. In the play's opening scene, he stands beside a hot-dog-stand umbrella, hawking his wares. "I got hot dogs," he chants. He pauses. "I got muffins." Beat. "I got coffee." José's tone is one of entreaty, but for what? Before we can answer the question, he has scaled the wall to his right. He hangs there from a metal bar, like a solitary child on a jungle gym longing for someone to come out and play. We could buy a muffin from José, but we can't save him from the thoughts and images that haunt him still, making his eyes a force field of melancholy, drawing us in.

In addition to selling hot dogs, José visits the local V.A. hospital, where he becomes a paid subject in an experiment that is meant to erase the horrors of war from his memory. He also works at a barbershop—New York is the home of the multitasking poor—where he has to listen to the banal pronouncements of Charlie Sansome (Richard Petrocelli), a policeman and a veteran of that other war, the one in Vietnam: "Made some friends, lost some friends. Give an' take. . . . Give an' take, up an' down. This is life. The good, the bad—the in-between. Made me the man I am today." Charlie is a blowhard, especially on the subject of women ("Heart gets a little boom-boom-boom, activity begins stirring in the pants. . . . This ETERNAL love crap, Joey. It's for the fuckin' birds"). But it's love, love as it existed in the past, not the present, that obsesses nearly all of the characters in the play.

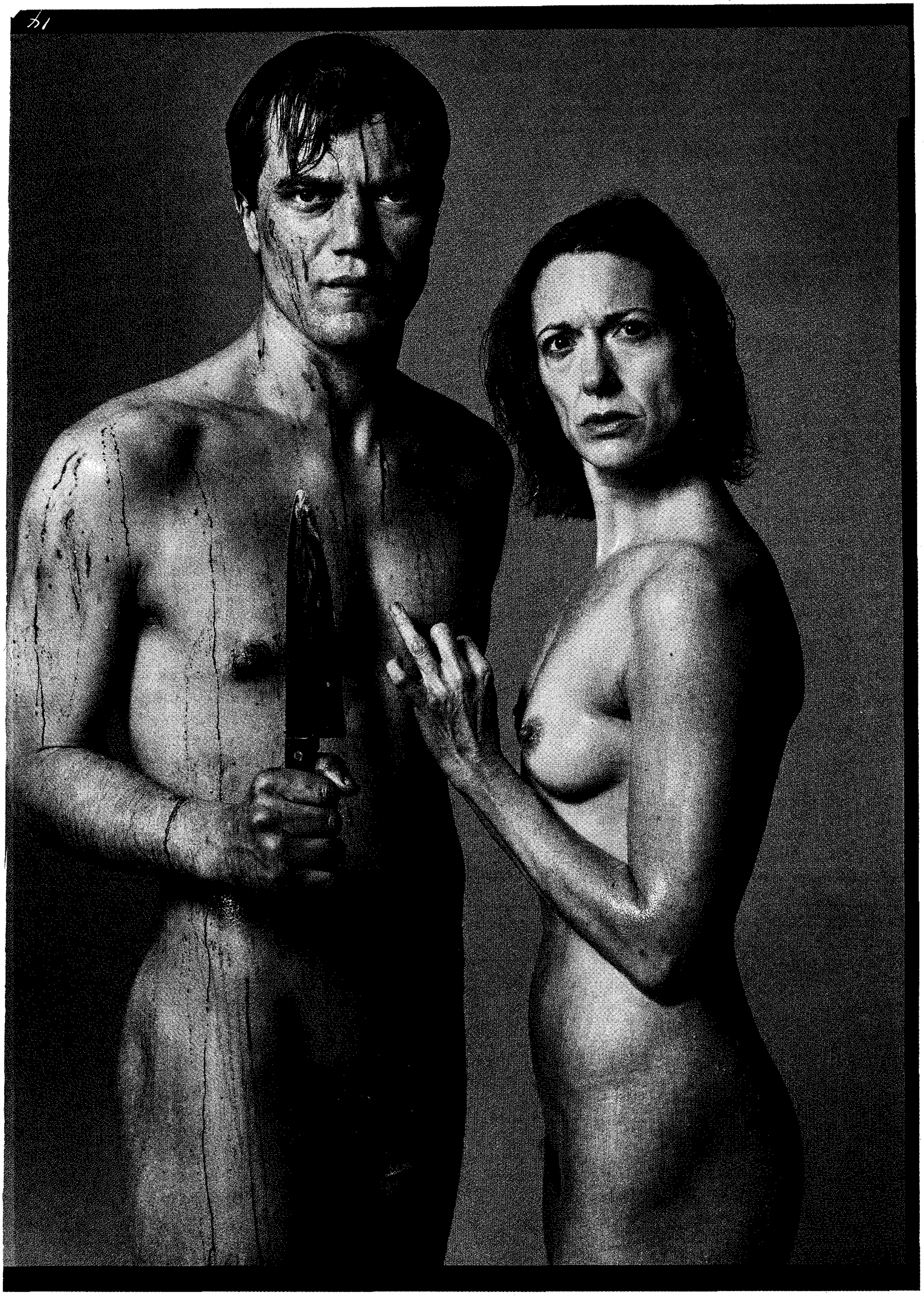
Of course, José's dream of financial security and his dream of emotional security are one and the same—he longs for a cushion to shield him from the various blows that life has dealt him. He is also struggling to win back his girlfriend, Vivian (Judy Reyes), and their catatonic son. In alternating scenes, we see Vivian passing time with her friend Nikki (the very funny Portia), all the while hoping for something better, something more. When Nikki points out that the handsome police officer John Rodriguez (Jason Manuel Olazábal) seems to have taken a shine to her, Vivian reaches, with some trepidation, for a new dream. John, she imagines, will at last free her from the memory of José's pain, and from his unreasonable demands for love, which have left her where she is now: sitting in her kitchen, smoking cigarettes and staring into space. As José, Ortiz has an intensity that is all his own—his emotional depth is perfectly balanced by a tender intellectualism—and it complements the charismatic physicality of Reyes's scenes with Olazábal, once their courtship begins. Olazábal has all the vitality and vanity that the part requires. His carnality as John becomes a sort of mirror image of José's sadness. The cad we can't help finding attractive, John draws us to him, time and again. And when he makes Vivian suffer, in this dance of barely made connections, he throws our sympathies right back to José.

"Guinea Pig Solo" is inventive and fresh, but just a little too long. If the show were tighter, its tragedy would hit harder. Instead, when José is finally carted off, we feel a kind of relief. Perhaps the problem lies not with Leonard's script but with the show's zealous director, Ian Belton, who is too eager by half to show us what he can do. In the end, though, what he can do is a great deal. His imagination, along with the cast's naked enthusiasm, makes us forgive any faults that "Guinea Pig Solo" might have.

A similar show-biz energy infuses "Bug" (at the Barrow Street Theatre), but you could miss it at first, given the deliberately slow pace of the first act, and its deceptively formulaic situations. At the opening, we find ourselves in Sam Shepard's "Fool for Love" territory, with a little bit of "Silkwood" thrown in for good measure. Agnes White (the incomparable Shannon Cochran) stands at the door to her small, dingy room in a residential hotel somewhere near Oklahoma City. The night is almost over, which means that Agnes, who works as a bartender in

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

The stars of "Bug," Michael Shannon and Shannon Cochran, in New York City, April 29, 2004.



a town that God may or may not have forsaken, can kick back, hoist a few, and maybe do some lines, too—anything to stave off loneliness. The phone rings. Maybe it's a wrong number, or maybe it's another hang-up from Agnes's abusive ex-husband, Jerry (the deeply arresting Michael Cullen), who continues to stalk her. Before long, though, Agnes won't have to worry about Jerry. Her female partner in crime, R.C. (Dee Pelletier, who looks like a cross between Mary Beth Hurt and Amy Madigan, and whose pluckiness more than rivals theirs), shows up with a little distraction—a guy named Peter Evans (Michael Shannon), who seems to want to hang out, too. He's quiet, but he's a presence, and before Agnes knows it she's in love—committed to this man whose strange aura of disconnect she feels obliged to heal, or, at least, to understand.

As written by Tracy Letts and directed by Dexter Bullard, "Bug" is never exactly what it seems. The naturalistic tone of the opening leads one to expect a kind of "Frankie and Johnny" set in the prairie. But the author and the director are much, much smarter than that. They override those expectations with scenes of casual surrealism that culminate, in the second half of the play, in acts of physical and emotional violence that do more than shock: they arouse both pity and despair. During these scenes of violence, one is reminded of the groundbreaking theatre companies of the past—the Living Theatre, Peter Brook's International Center of Theatre Research—which forced the spectator to confront his own worst fear: that by watching the performance he was somehow complicit in the violence that was unfolding before him. The cast that Bullard has assembled here is equal to the task. His actors can turn in an instant from realism to Grand Guignol. They wholly inhabit their characters' bodies, working second by second toward the play's horrifying conclusion. Cochran and Shannon give not only two of the most nuanced performances you'll ever see but two of the greatest. Reckless in their roles, they insure that their characters will haunt your imagination long after the play is over. The way some lovers do. ♦

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[1] Peschel RE, Colberg JW, Surgery, brachytherapy, and external-beam radiotherapy for early prostate cancer. Lancet Oncol 2003; 4: 233-41.
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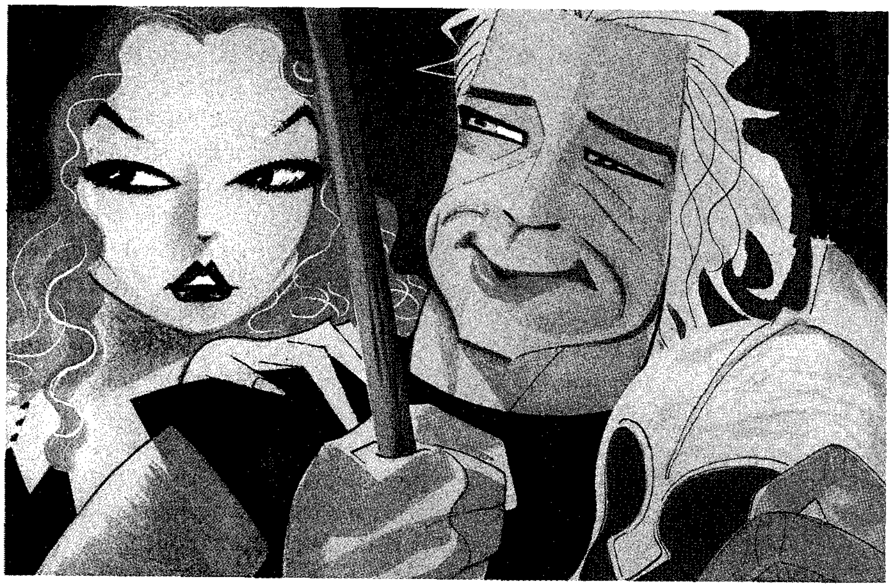
Wolfgang Petersen's "Troy."

BY DAVID DENBY

The Bible is so varied and so richly suggestive as a narrative source that moviemakers can go low ("The Ten Commandments," "The Passion of the Christ") or high ("The Gospel According to St. Matthew") and get away with either strategy. Hollywood has turned other ancient sources, including the Greek myths, into science fiction, and strongmen like Hercules and Samson into immobile behemoths with raven-haired beauties sprawled at their feet. But how do you do Homer—not just well, but at all? Consider these lines from the Iliad, in Richmond Lattimore's awkwardly powerful translation: "He cried out then, a great city, broken, the spear in him, / and fell, thunderously, and the spear in his heart was stuck fast / but the heart was panting still and beating to shake the butt end / of the spear." Homer's appalling physical directness would seem to make him a natural for movies, but his way of joining together tenderness and cruelty, his invocation of home and family in the midst of battle, his nobility and amplitude, as well as the unregenerate strangeness of a mind and culture speaking to us from almost three thousand years ago—all that would seem to make his work a Stygian bog for adaptors. In 1955, seven writers, including Ben Hecht, labored, in vain, on the klutzy "Ulysses." Next came that slice of stale fruitcake "Helen of Troy" (1956), with Rossana Podestà. Since then, mostly silence, and I have to admit that the prospect of "Troy," with its half-naked movie stars—Brad Pitt as the arrogant Greek glory-freak Achilles, Eric Bana as the husbandly Trojan warrior Hector—gave me pause. But I was wrong. The writer, David Benioff, and the director, Wolfgang Petersen, may have made some unfortunate choices—they compressed and changed elements in the story, making it morally conventional (the bad guys get punished) in a way that the Iliad isn't, and they never found a comfortable language for their heroes to speak. ("May the gods keep the wolves in the hills and the women in our beds" is a fairly typical locution; shooting it in the ancient Greek might have been a better bet.) Yet the movie is successful—harsh, serious, and both exhilarating and tragic, the right tonal combination for Homer. In the



Between battles: Rose Byrne, as Briseis, with Brad Pitt, as Achilles.

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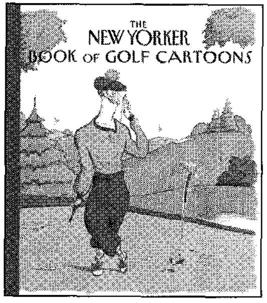

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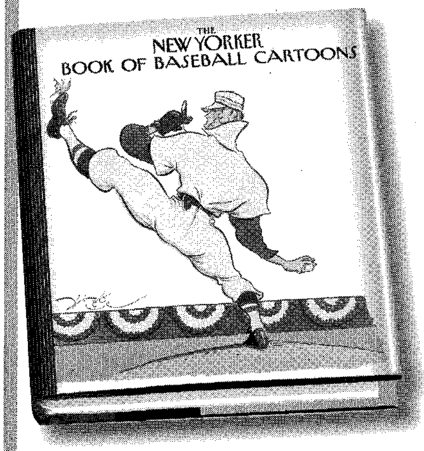

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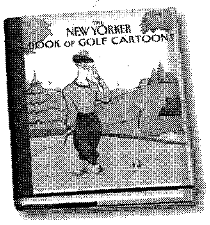

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end, the city-state of Troy is sacked and burned, but the Greeks don't win anything worth winning. The Greek heroes and generals, showoffs with eagle pride, tell one another that poets will someday celebrate their exploits. But the bitterness of loss is what they will sing of, and this hundred-and-seventy-five-million-dollar spectacle honors the intentions, if not the style or the means, of the poets.

Homer himself is unreachable and unaccountable. He probably worked in the eighth or ninth century B.C., three or four hundred years after the war is supposed to have taken place, but no one is sure. No one is even sure that he actually existed—the epics attributed to him are sometimes claimed to be the work of multiple authors, although the unity of the texts argues against that. In the Iliad, Homer dramatized only a brief, furious period near the end of the Trojan War, which lasted ten years. The Trojan Horse and the sacking of the city are not part of the poem. As for the past, the scandal that set the whole business in motion—the flight of gorgeous Helen with Paris, a handsome young prince of Troy, from the palace of Helen's husband, Menelaus—has virtually been forgotten. And Homer only sketches in what happened next: the actions of Agamemnon, Menelaus' brother, as he gathers together a loose federation of Greek kings and their warriors to avenge Menelaus and bring back Helen. The poem is centrally the story of Achilles—his quarrel with Agamemnon over a slave girl, his withdrawal from the battle, his return to fighting after his young tentmate, Patroclus, has been killed—and it ends with the death of the chief Trojan defender, Hector.

Benioff and Petersen must have thought that few people in a modern democracy would accept sullied honor as a necessary cause for war, because they have turned Agamemnon into a kind of Greek Bismarck, a man mad for power, who, in the entertaining person of Brian Cox, has a talent for insinuation and malice. This Agamemnon doesn't give a damn about the pride of Menelaus (Brendan Gleeson); he wants to unify the Greeks and their neighbors under his own command, and he uses Menelaus' loss as an excuse to attack Troy and conquer the eastern Aegean. Benioff and Petersen tell the war story from start to finish (they begin before the Paris-Helen affair and end with the death of Achilles). By making a movie that is less about Achilles' wrath than about Agamemnon's overweening ambition, the filmmakers have changed the material from semicomprehensible legend to recognizable worldly strategy, from myth to politics, from archetype to psychology. Achilles is a man whose time has already passed. As far as Agamemnon is concerned, Achilles *is* legend—an honor-bound killer, uncanny in his abilities but unmanageable as a man. Agamemnon knows that the future belongs to men like him, but, on the battlefield, he's nothing without Achilles—and he knows that, too, and he hates it.

Homer has the gods setting the various quarrels in motion, intervening, playing favorites, and muddying the outcome of events. Tormented with magic and fable, the poem feels larger than life; it's something from a heroic age, something *told.* But the movie takes place in front of our eyes and concerns real men—unaided by gods—who fight on sandy beaches traversed again and again until they become maddeningly familiar. "Troy" is easily the best battle film since "Saving Private Ryan." Wolfgang Petersen, the German-born director of "Das Boot" and "In the Line of Fire," sends a dark Greek swarm, outfitted with heavy bronze armor, against a dark Trojan swarm, and the pileup outside the walls of Troy is cataclysmic and frightening. The scenes are actually of some military interest—Achilles' daredevil troop of warriors from his own kingdom, the Myrmidons, storm the beach, arrange their black shields into a wall, and then leap over the shields like dolphins bursting out of a wave. Digital painting, as far as I can make out, is used only functionally, to fill out armies and fleets. The duels are fought out in the open, and you can see, as at a championship boxing match, what's at stake in turning left rather than right, feinting rather than thrusting. When someone dies, you feel the weight and consequence of his fall, and that sense of an oak crashing down is very much in Homer's mournfully celebratory spirit.

Brad Pitt, a physically uninhibited actor, can be fun to watch when he throws himself around a set. The trouble here is that the most expressive part of his body is his much exposed rear; his eyes, seen in closeup, reveal nothing. Pitt may know this, because he tries hard to make Achilles a complexly willful man, murderous yet majestic, a vain athlete needled by the realization that the glory he desires is worthless. He stares out from his helmet and puckers his friendly mouth into a dominating sneer. But Pitt's face is pretty, rather than noble, and he doesn't have the right voice for tragic heroism. Petersen and his producers surround Pitt, an Oklahoma boy, with expert English, Irish, Scottish, and Australian actors (films that revive the classical past invariably draw from the London stage), and when he tries to match the others he comes out sounding hollow, as if he were reciting in a school play. Still, Pitt seems to have gained speed as well as pounds of extra muscle for this role, and when his Achilles crouches in an angular position, like a figure on a Greek vase, or leaps into action, rushing straight at his opponent and then spinning and slashing, he's extraordinary—a man who has developed a lightning style of combat never before seen on earth. By contrast, Eric Bana, as Hector, is slower, heavier, and more dogged than inspired. Bana, the young Australian actor who looked lost in "The Hulk," has a quiet triumph as Hector, an agonizingly responsible man who knows that war is always about survival, not glory. Bana has soft eyes and an aura of gentleness; he makes a fine reluctant warrior.

Many triumphs flow from the central decision to make a realistic, rather than a poetic, epic. The burial ceremonies, the moments of exhaustion and disgust, are all very moving, and Petersen insists on a certain easy wartime candor about sex—or at least hetero sex. When Achilles comes back to his tent from battle, tired and filthy, he strips off his armor and falls naked into bed with his waiting mistress (Rose Byrne). Nothing happens, however, between Achilles and Patroclus in the tent. Readers have always suspected that the men were lovers—how else to explain the extent of Achilles' grief and rage when Patroclus is killed? In the movie, Patroclus is no more than a protégé (and a "cousin"), so Achilles seems a little nuts when he goes on a rampage. There are some big-movie flourishes I could do without, like James Horner's music—wordless wailing women, pounding drums, the Big Theme that returns like Nemesis, again and again. The burning of Troy is impressive, but it's not as inventively staged as the battles outside the city. And sometimes the lack of play and fantasy leads to simple banalities, like the earnest love scenes between a dewy young Paris (Orlando Bloom) and a rather anxious Helen (Diane Kruger). These two are the movie stars of the Trojan War; it's hard to believe they weren't wickedly turned on by being at the center of so much gossip, but, when they get together, they are so placid they might be a young suburban wife and a handsome lawn man smooching in an afternoon soap opera. ♦

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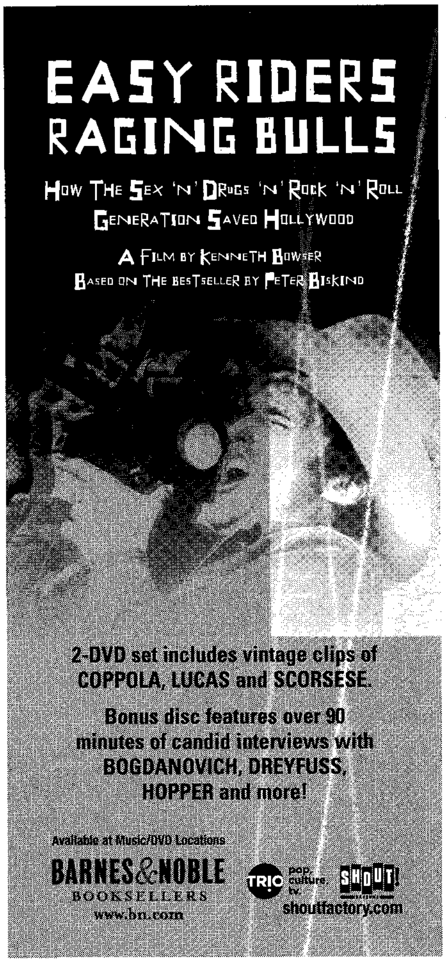

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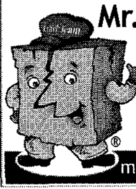

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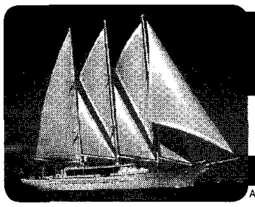

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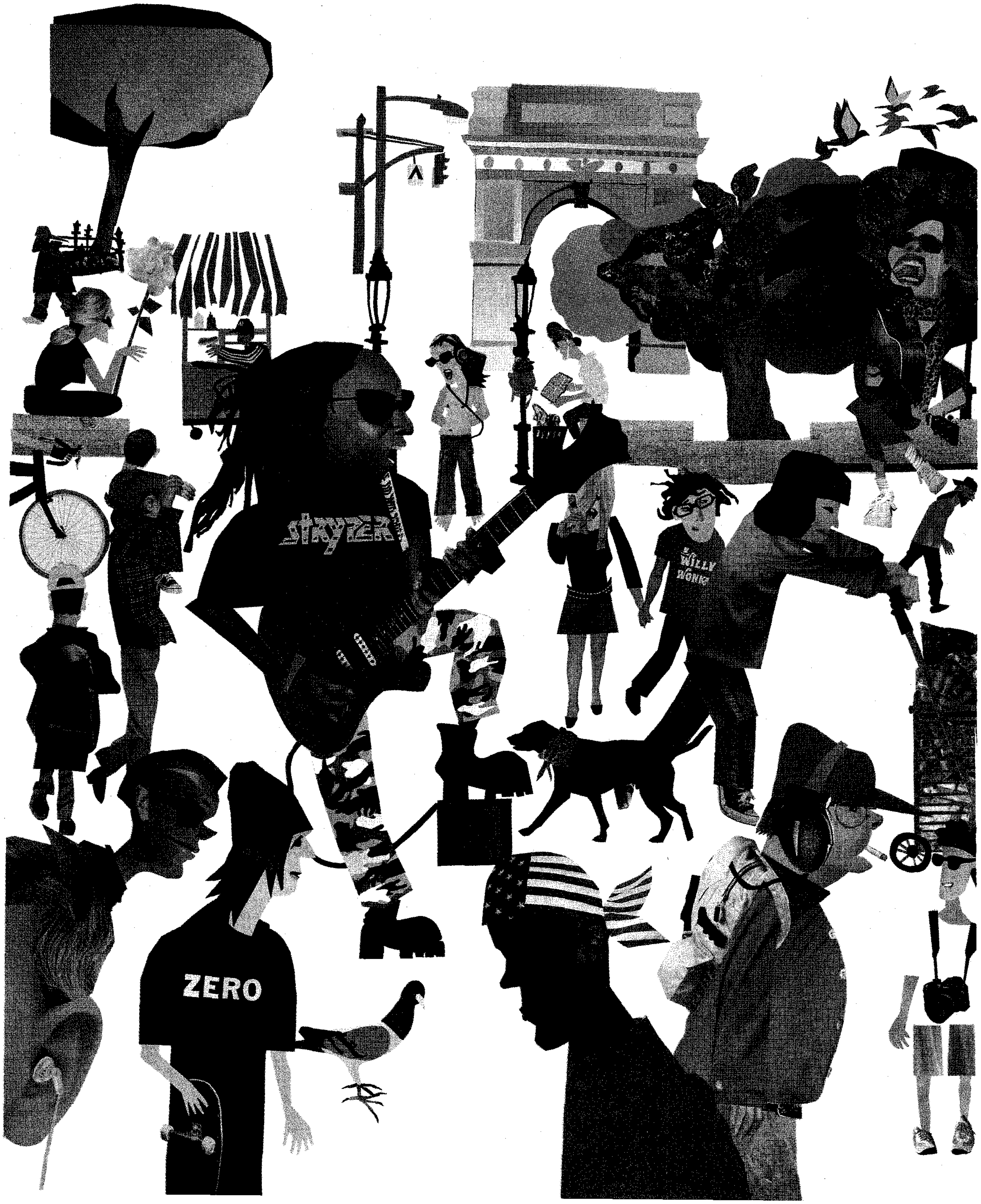
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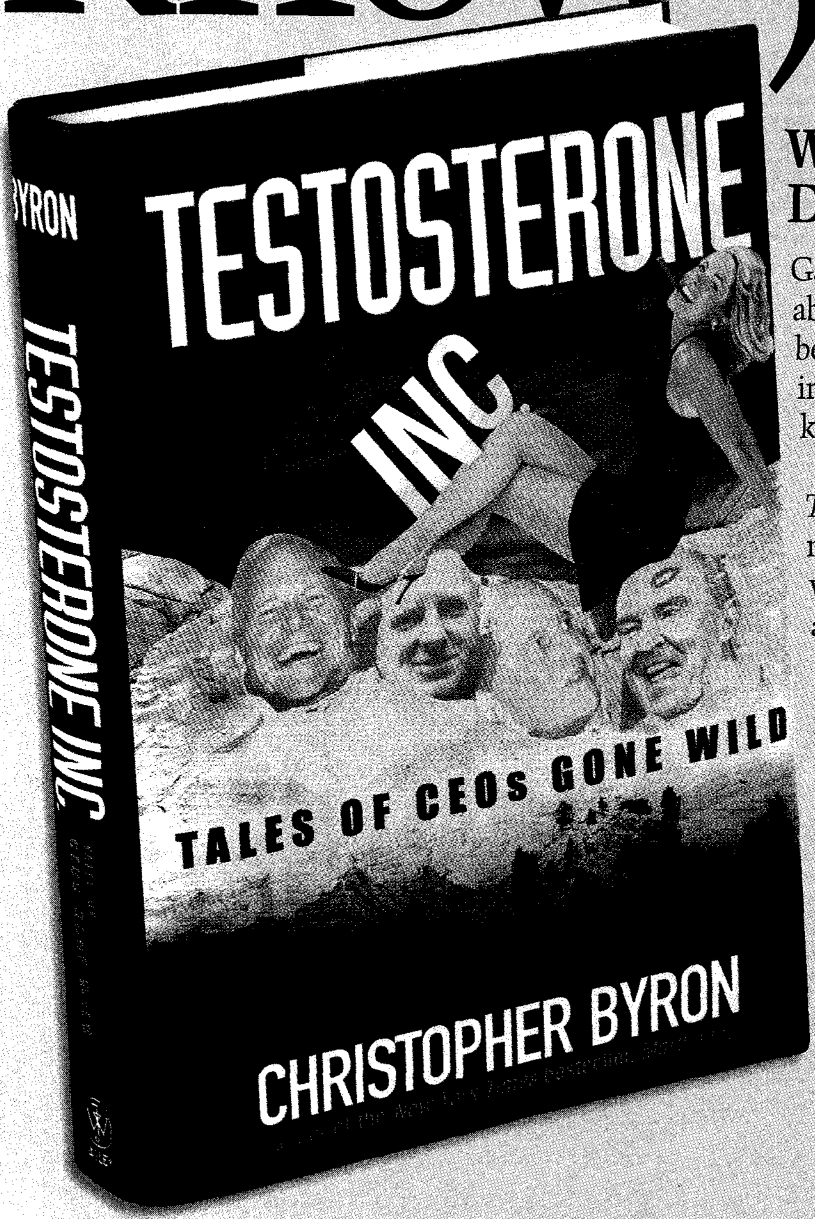
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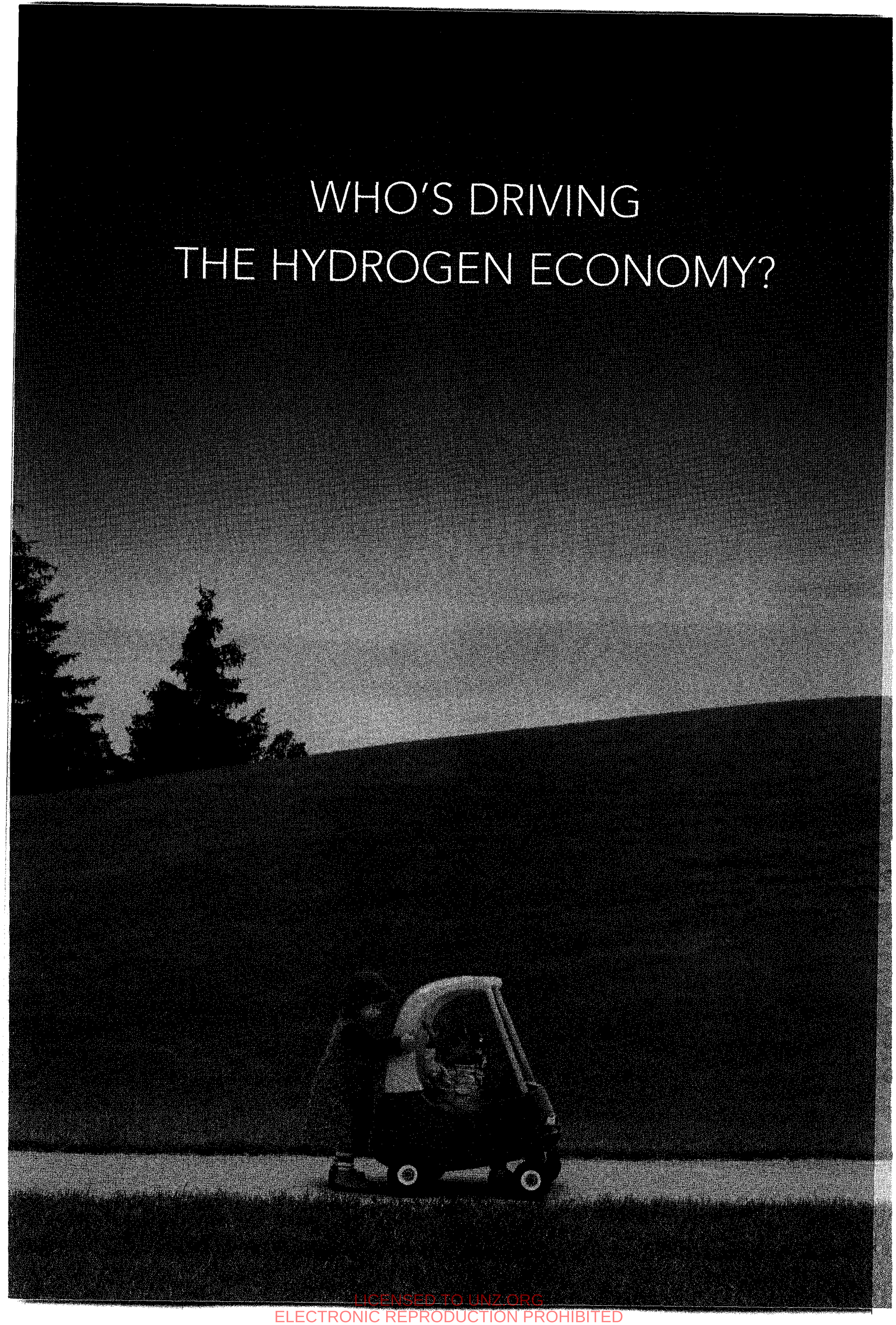

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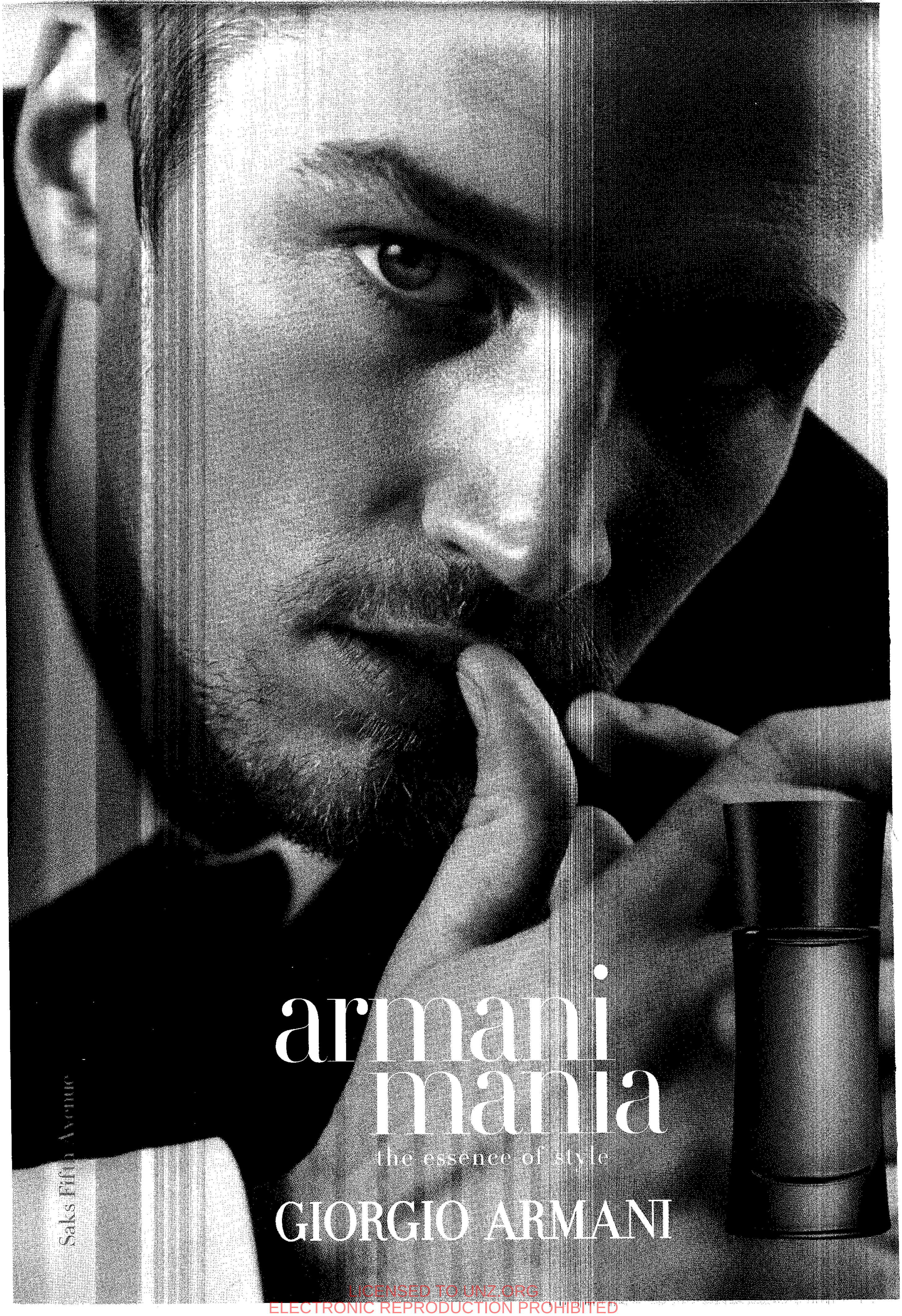
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